Legends of Florence

Collected from the People

And Re-told

by

Charles Godfrey Leland

(*Hans Breitmann*)

Second Series

Third Issue

LONDON: DAVID NUTT

57–59 *LONG ACRE*

TWO SHILLINGS NET

BY THE SAME AUTHOR AND PUBLISHERS

Legends of Florence

FIRST SERIES

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London Easter

To the Editors

affectionately

Peter Bartlett

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR AND PUBLISHER

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FIRST SERIES

SOME PRESS NOTICES

Daily Chronicle.—"Mr. Leland adds to the qualifications of a practical collector and sifter of popular legends and antiquities that of a charming literary style, singularly adapted to his subject-matter. . . . There is, in fact, no page at which the present book may be opened that will not afford new points of interest to the general reader as well as the student of folk-lore."

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LEGENDS OF FLORENCE

LA TORRE DEL GALLO, OR THE TOWER OF GALILEO

"Hung o'er his shoulders like the moon, whose orb
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views,
At evening, from the top of Fiesole,
Or in Valdarno to espy new lands,
Rivers, or mountains in her spotty globe."
—MILTON, *Paradise Lost.*

"A cockatrice hast thou hatched to the world,
Whose unavoided eye is murtherous."
—SHAKESPEARE, *King Richard the Third.*

THE invaluable, and often accurate, though at times poetical, *John Murray*, when guiding us about Central Italy, remarks that the Torre del Gallo in Florence was named after the family to which it belonged. But the *Vox populi* or public opinion hath it quite otherwise, and derives the term from a very different source. In which, as in too many cases, the said *Vox* is assuredly a *Vox diaboli*, or voice of diabolical falsehood; but that is none of my business—surely. And as the building is better known as Galileo's Tower, the tourist naturally believes that Gallo is Galileo abbreviated.

But Gallo or Gallio, this time-serving tower is of world-wide fame, and every astronomer should wear a blessed pebble from it in a ring, for in it most of those observations were made to which Milton alludes in the description of Satan's shield which I have placed as a most appropriate

motto to this somewhat diabolical chapter. The building is said to be almost the same as it was in Galileo's time; it is marvellous that it has not been torn entirely down, as was the house of Dante, and rebuilt, omitting all the ancient picturesqueness, as is the wont in Italy, in order to "improve it." It has been fitted up as a museum of Galilean curiosities, and some of these are interesting indeed. Not far below it is the Villa del Gioiello, or Jewel Villa, where from 1631 to 1642 Galileo dwelt, and where he was certainly visited by John Milton in 1638. And here I note a strange coincidence. When Galileo was "abandoned and neglected by his Medicean protectors," and was cruelly and infamously persecuted by the Church ("which never yet changed, from the beginning, the millionth part of a hair's-breadth of a doctrine in anything"), it was here that the sage lost his sight, and died.

That Galileo and Milton both became blind is sad and strange, the more so when we reflect that it was the world and the Church in different forms which persecuted and was blind to them. That such children of light should have lived in darkness is indeed terrible. And truly it is something more than a mere flight of fancy to say that Galileo was the Italian Milton, when we reflect how the souls of both wandered with the stars, seeing in them, as Jean Paul did, "eyes of light."

The legend which is attached to this villa has nothing to do with Galileo, but it contains a very curious fragment of very ancient folk-lore. *Et verbatim sic.*

La Torre del Gallo.

"This is a very ancient tower on a hill beyond San Miniato, and it was indeed once a tower of terror to all who had to pass it by night; for one beheld a mighty serpent which made as if it would pursue one, while another encountered a devil—some one horror and some another. And those who boasted that they had no fear, and dared to pass it by night, were sure to

hear coming from it ghastly hissings, and screeching, whistling sounds so appalling that those who listened to them sickened with dread, and got, as it were, a malady from which they slowly died.

"Then after a time children began to disappear, and no one knew where they had gone, or what became of them, and a malady as of fear and horror came over all who dwelt near the place; and no man knew what it was nor whence it came; all that they knew was that heart and hope had gone out of them, and they lived like heart-broken men and women in despair awaiting death.

"Now near this tower dwelt a priest, over whom the terror or malady had no power; and one hot afternoon when he, having no desire to sleep, was looking from his window, he saw all at once in it a strange being, which was one half a great serpent and one half a cock.

"Then the priest took his gun, and loaded it with a wax taper,[1] and got ready a great basin, and fired at the cock-serpent; and he had so contrived it that the creature fell into the basin of (holy) water, into which it voided all its venom, so that the water became of a deep green colour. And this done, the evil spirit lost its power, and fear and sickness were no longer on the souls of those who dwelt thereabout, nor were children any longer missing, and all the parents and the poor sufferers went to thank the priest.

"And thus it was that the name of the *Torre del Gallo* first came, because, as it is said, the serpent was born of a cock, whence it was half a cock in form—*e cosi va avanti sempre la Torre del Gallo.*"

There are probably very few of my readers who will not recognise in the serpent-cock the deadly basilisk, familiar in fabled lore, which is depicted in Aldrovandus and all old writers on monsters. It killed people with its Medusa-glance, it spread about it an upas atmosphere of death—it was Horror personified. There is a vast amount of folk-lore current regarding it, and much confusion therein.

When I was young, I often heard the question, "Why is a hen immortal?" the answer being, "Because her

[1] *Charicha il fucile a cera.*

son never sets." But according to the old dealers in wonders, a cock when seven years old lays an egg, on which he sets, and from which a basilisk, or, as some call it, a *cockatrice*, is hatched. One form of it is probably the mysterious *Manicore*, common in English cathedrals, which has the head of a woman, the body of a cock or of an egg, and the tail of a serpent, signifying the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. It was originally a Gnostic-Egyptian astrologic symbol. It became involved with the Abraxas and Abracadabra, and all kinds of occult tradition, and its investigation leads us into a labyrinth of sorceries. Allied to it, yet not quite the same, is the *Manticora* with a lion's body, but I confess a very dim memory, as regards these names and things. The reader will find much on the subject in Baring Gould's works, and especially in *Myth-Land*, by Edward Hulme.

But I wonder whether Galileo himself is not in this legend the priest who shot the serpent.

There is a story which I read many years ago in a Norse book of *facetiæ*, how once in Bergen an astronomer had planted "a telescope upon a frame and pointed to the sky," in a public place to take observations, being carefully observed the while by two watchmen or police officials, to whom his movements seemed very suspicious. At last, when all was arranged, he took a sight—and lo! just at that instant a meteor shot downward from the sky like a long fiery serpent!

The watchmen at once in great anger seized on the sage, bidding him cease all such work unless he would go to prison. "It is quite dark enough as it is," they said, "and if you shoot any more stars we shall have no light at all." But in any case, Galileo the astronomer by his increasing knowledge helped to kill the snake of ignorance and darkness, though the Police thought it was the other way.

The visit to Galileo deeply impressed Milton, and there

can be no rational doubt that the latter referred to the Torre del Gallo when he wrote:

> "Or may my lamp at midnight hour
> Be seen from some high, lonely tower,
> Where I may long outwatch the Bear
> With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
> The spirit of Plato, or unfold
> What worlds or what vast regions hold
> The immortal soul that hath forsook
> Her mansion in this fleshly nook."

It is all worth thinking of when we visit the Torre del Gallo.

I cannot now recall the name of the great writer of the Reformation who compared the Church of Rome to a basilisk engendered between that old serpent the devil and the cock of St. Peter, but to such a zealous Protestant it would have been marvellously illustrated by this legend of the Tower of Galileo. The basilisk, like the Gorgon of old, benumbed into death every one with its glance; it was the symbol of reaction, of that petrifaction which causes men everywhere to regard the "old fossil" as the ideal of ultra and stupid conservatism, and which puts men to torture and the rack, as Galileo was put, for announcing plain truth. And the Basilisk would have put him to death had he not nominally recanted.

"Oh, ye," writes the sage Flaxius, "who condemn, and would fain kill, all who utter new things which ye hate, because they are new unto you—beware lest the High Cockalorum Copperhead Serpent of excessive Conservatism and Vanity, which is all one with the Basilisk, enter into your hearts! It was this Basilisk which inspired men to crucify Christ, and it has since then caused the death and torture of millions in His name. Yes, beware of the Basilisk wherever ye be, for it hath myriad forms, and benumbs us all more or less, when and where we least suspect its existence.

> "'Life hath many a sin and risk,
> But its greatest curse is the Basilisk.'

"Yet the truth has triumphed despite the Basilisk, both in religion and astronomy—*Vicisti Galilæ!*"

THE DOORS OF THE BAPTISTERY IN FLORENCE, OR THE LEGEND OF GHIBERTI

"And his handiwork did honour to his professions, for he portrayed in bronze many and many a shape most beautifully."—*Saxo Grammaticus, Book III.*

IF there be any one object in Florence, or objects, which the traveller is as sure to see as his hotel-bill, it is the gates of the Baptistery of St. John, before which you may behold at all times tourists alternately reading from *Murray* or *Baedeker* and looking at the bronze. Therefore I was extremely desirous to find a legend of the people on the subject, but it was a long time before I obtained the following.

"There was once in Florence a young sculptor named Ghiberti. He had a true, kind heart and great talent in his art, but, as the proverb says—

"'Chi non ha debito,
Non ha credito.'

"He who has no debts has never been trusted, and he who has no enemies has neither success nor talent; and as Ghiberti was fortunate and successful, he had many to envy, who became enemies.

"Now it came to pass that Ghiberti was to make the great bronze doors of the Baptistery of St. John in Florence; for he was as much the master among all other sculptors as the cathedral rises above all the smaller churches.

"Then his rivals hired a sorceress to bewitch Ghiberti, so that he could not work as he had done. He found that his thoughts went astray as if he were mad. If he began to make a *puttino* or cupid or an angel, when it was done it looked like a monkey or a goblin or a devil.

"There was at this time in Florence a very beautiful woman who knew more than merely how to spin or eat bread, and no wonder, for she was half fairy, or angel, and the other half sorceress. Anyhow she was wise, and very good when it pleased her so to be now and then. Her name was Teodora, and she was a bitter enemy to Chanetta, the one who had bewitched Ghiberti.

"One day Teodora went to the studio of Ghiberti to see the beautiful works of art. There she found a vase which pleased her so that she determined to buy it. But Ghiberti, who had been much smitten by her beauty and marvellous intelligence, insisted that she should accept the bronze as a gift.

"Then Teodora, thanking him graciously, asked him with much interest and kindly, how all went with him in his work, and if the gate was getting on well.

"Hearing this, Ghiberti sighed, and answered that it went badly indeed, and so *poco-a-poco*, little by little, told her all his trouble; and she, who had fallen head over ears in love with him, replied after a pause:

"'Now I will tell the whole truth, which is that thou art bewitched, nor can the spell be broken by me, since, as the proverb says, *contra la forza non vale ragione*—reason can do nothing against superior strength; yet it is also true that strength may yield to craft, and to fight the devil one needs a devil and a half.

"'One witch must not undo the work of another, and to restore thy talent would take much time, yes, months to sweep away all this cursed work, and I am but a new broom. *Granata nuova, tre dì buona*—a new broom sweeps clean only three days. And yet I can bring it to pass at once that thou canst have the gates made in bronze, and that so magnificently that thou canst gain the prize.

"'Know that there are about us in the air thousands of *folletti*, goblin-sprites, who live in fear lest they shall some day perish, since after a thousand years their life must end, and many fear lest they should become devils. Therefore they are delighted when they can become statues or any objects in churches, for then they can be saved.

"'Many of the images which thou seest in old churches were not made by man, but are goblins turned to stone. They dwell in the stone as a bee lives in his hive, as a man in a house, and fly forth when they please.

"'Now I will come here to-night, for this is a great hall,

such as I need for the work, and one where we shall not be disturbed, and after midnight thou shalt see wonderful things.'

"So she came that night, and after making a conjuration, there appeared a great number of spirits, whom Teodora thus addressed:—

"'Voi, belli folletti tutti!
Spiriti gentili dell' aria!
Se volete essere immortali,
Come gli altri Cristiani,
E non essere dannati,
E sempre essere felici,
Nel regno beato del cielo,
E vedere l'aspetto di Dio,
Divenite belle statue,
Belle statue di bronzo,
Figurini nell' portone
Della chiesa San Giovanni
Nella bella Batisteria.'

"'All ye beauteous fairy beings,
Lovely and aërial spirits,
If ye wish to be immortal,
And become as other Christians,
And not be condemned for ever,
But for ever live contented
In the blest abode of Heaven,
Where ye can behold the Father,
Then be turned to charming statues,
Statues made of bronze, and resting
In the Church of San Giovanni,
Figurini in the portal
Of the fair Battisteria.'

"Then Ghiberti beheld the spirits arranging themselves in groups and turning to bronze, and ere long the gates were finished.

"So Ghiberti won the great reward, as well as the love of Teodora, who was ever with him.

"Now all the figures in these doors are the forms which goblins still inhabit. He or she who bears a magic ring, or a stone with a hole in it which has been duly conjured, or who was born on a Sunday, may see by looking through the ring or stone the spirits flying into or out of the statues or *figurini*. But the Sunday-born needs no ring, for he can look through his hand, rounding the fingers like a tube.

"And it is also said that the small figures of bronze or terra-cotta which are found in tombs or elsewhere in the country were all once spirits in the ancient time; and there are many people who still use them for magic or as charms.

"And all the figures which are of old time, such as the images in churches, which were once spirits, can be conjured with spells to speak and reveal secrets. For some of them know where treasures are hid, and others can tell how to cure disorders or win love, or where to go to secure good fortune. And thus it happened of old that people knew so much more about hidden things than we do, because they conversed more with goblins; but since the priests have forbidden such things men have grown ignorant."

This legend reminds me of something of which I should have spoken long before. When the reader is told that these tales come from ignorant old witches, and finds in them indications of a knowledge of art or literary culture, he will, judging by experience in England or America, think that this has been "foisted in" by the author, especially when the latter has been candid or foolish enough to admit that he *has* occasionally hammered a rusty old key into shape and polished it. But it must be remembered that till within a generation people of all classes and cultures in Italy believed in all this witchery and romance, and entered deeply into it—nobles and artists often being sorcerers. And when we bear it in mind that a strange proportion of the commonest *soldo*-reading of the populace consists of classic, mediæval, or poetic themes, which would be as foreign to a London costermonger or 'Arriet as Newton's *Principia*, my meaning cannot fail to be understood. To which the careful Flaxius appends:

"It happened to me, once upon a time, to hear a man of humble station say that nobody is really very great till folk begin to tell *lies* about him,—he meaning thereby not simply evil reports, but inventions of all kinds, whether eulogistic or 'slanderogatory,' epitaphs or libels. Even so 'twould seem that, in obedience to this higher law, poets or artists may be detected as *distingués* by the untruthful, albeit romantic legends which attach themselves to their names—the moral of it all being that bees as well as wasps light only on the best

fruit—or the vilest worms burrow within—turning the best to corruption.

"'By their tales shall ye know them.' This being true, it behoves him who would be famous, or at least well known to men, to see that during his life there be a good store of lies—I mean stories—well and carefully invented, all about himself, to be judiciously sprinkled, or skedaddled, or dropped along and distributed in libraries and among the public, particularly after his death. And I am verily of the opinion that Michael Angelo actually kept a scribe to manufacture anecdotes and repartees for him, or else that he paid people at large sixpence apiece for them.

"And note ye, that these *ana*, to 'take,' must not be too politeful or indicating a partial friend. Nay—'twere better that there should be some jolly *dis*-respect therein to indicate absolute truth. Thus if the Honourable Grand Old Man, acting on this hint, *should* prepare such a work, 'twould be far more advisable to call it 'Jolly Jokes by Old Bill,' or 'Howling Humbugs and Diddling Delusions of a Grand Back Gammoner,' than to give it a more complimentary title—since under such misleading names one can artfully introduce impressions of the very *ne plus ultra* of all that is noble, crafty, able, artful, wise, subtle, cunning, feline, leonine, vulpine, glorious, wily, sly, insidiously moral, clever, ingenious, tricky, facile, dexterous, adroit, ambiguous and bold. In which words are enumerated—when combined with *Success*—that which will go further to make a man popular than all the virtues—*tout en scramble*—which were ever realised or imagined."

THE GHOSTLY SMITH (LO SPIRITO MANES-CALCO), OR HOW SANTA CROCE GOT ITS NAME

"Hear'st thou afar a hammer's strokes
Deep ringing in the dark?
The Goblin Smith among the oaks,
Still at his mighty work?

And be it slow or faster,
He still must beat away,
Until he finds his master,
Or to the judgment-day."

THE following legend is given *verbatim*, with the exception of three entire words by me, which are enclosed in a parenthesis:

"There was once in days of yore a Friar who was in every way a good man, and moreover a great artist in metal, working with wondrous skill in iron or gold. And every morning when he woke he uttered this prayer:

"'O Lord, who art so good and merciful, I pray Thee aid me that I this day may do some good to some one, for without Thy aid I can do nothing.'

"One night when he was travelling alone and late through a gloomy wood, where he was almost sure that he must pass the night *al fresco* in the open air, he heard very far away regularly repeated strokes, as of a hammer on metal.

"Then the good Friar said to himself, 'That is beyond all doubt some blacksmith at his work. O Lord, with Thy aid I shall now find a night's lodging!'

"So he followed the sound for a long time through the windings of the wood, here and there—truly it was very rough travelling after rain, over stumps and in the thickets—till at last he saw a light, and following it up, came to a forge.

"And there he indeed saw, busily working, a man who was very terrible to behold, yea, who seemed as if suffering awful

agony. His face was pale as wax, his eyes glared like those of a spirit. He was hammering at a large iron crucifix, and with every blow he uttered a groan.

"'What art thou doing, in the name of God?' asked the Friar.

"'I am a poor soul condemned to work night and day on this crucifix,' was the reply.

"'I was once a great artist in metal, and far too proud of my skill. Now it came to pass that I began to make this crucifix, which I declared should be my greatest work. And when Good Friday came, every one said to me that I must stop working, but I replied, "Be it Friday good or bad—*Venerdi santo o non santo*—I'll not stop working till this work is done!"

"'When lo! I heard a voice which said:

"'"Thou shalt indeed labour at the crucifix and know no rest, until one shall come who is more expert than thou art!"

"'Now three hundred years have passed, and I work without rest or peace, and my great skill has been my great misery, and prolongs my penance. For many have come to strive with me, but none are my equals; and what makes it worse for me is that in these later days men no longer work in metal with such art as we had in our time.'

"Then the good Friar said, 'Let me try!'

"So he began to pray to San Luigi[1] and to work at the same time.

"Then the smith, beholding this, was sore amazed; he stood as if enchanted or turned to stone, beholding the marvellous work executed by the priest.

"The fire shone marvellously, as if it would aid, while *folletti* and goblins came forth (from the forest), and gathered round amazed to behold the cross.

"The Monk at last said, '*E finito!*—'Tis done!'

"'Yea, it is more beautiful than aught which I could ever have done,' gasped the dying smith. '*Sono in pace*—now I am at rest.'

"And saying this, the Manescalco fell to dust, from which rose a spirit of light which flew up to Heaven.

"'I thank thee, O God!' exclaimed the Friar, 'that I by Thy aid have this day *done one good work!*'

"So the smith was at peace, and the good Friar went his

[1] *I.e.*, Eligio, Aloysius, Aloy, the St. Eloi of the French, the patron-saint of metal-workers.

way to bless others, which is the best life here on earth. And the crucifix, which he bore away with him, is to be seen to this day in the Church of Santa Croce in Florence, and it was from that that it took its name."

"*Hæc fabula docet*," wrote the ever deductive or moralising Flaxius, "that dogged perseverance to small purpose is a foolish business. This tale is like that of Peter Rugg, who dwelt in Boston, and once when a storm was coming up, which he was told would render his immediate return impossible, swore that he would get home that night, 'or else,' he added, 'may I never see home!' And Fate took him at his word. For a hundred years Peter Rugg drove all over Eastern Massachusetts, just in advance of a terrific storm, anxiously inquiring, like a dazed, lost man, the way to Boston. And this lasted till the home passed away, when he vanished.

"And such, too, was the strange and eerie fate of Wolfram Schreckenspuk of Nuremberg, who swore that he would work at making buttons till he had made a thousand gulden. Which thing he indeed accomplished, but lost during the task golden opportunities to make a thousand times as much—to say nothing of a bride and other small things of the sort.

"Truly perseverance is a very great virtue, but 'tis misapplied when blindly persisted in, or there is not talent enough to back it. *Perseverando vinces* was illustrated on the old Continental money by the picture of a bear endeavouring to climb an ice-bank. Yet it might have happened that the bear would have done better by trying to climb another place."

THE SPIRIT OF THE ARNO

"I hear a Voice you cannot hear,
Which says I must not stay:
I see a Hand you cannot see,
Which beckons me away."
—TICKELL.

"And Maestro Giuliano del Carmine, who read unto great audiences on astrology at Pisa, declared that every man hath a spirit or fata, which leads him on to strange adventure or to startling chance, and this appears to him at least once in this life as a white small hand."—*Facerie e Burle*, 1593.

THE memory of every man retains what may be called strange *moments* of his life, the memorabilia of startling sights—electric revelations, in a word; spirits of fire and light, an instant seen in the dark night and then invisible; a lovely face one second in a crowd, coming and going even as meteors do, yet which in future never are forgot.

They are great and small these spirits, who, disguised as events, emotions, revelations, dreams, music, tones, words, and images, flash, fly before and overcome us, *à l'improviste*, departing with the instant as they came, yet leaving aye a mark indelible, as doth the lightning when it leaps to earth. Some are very small, a mere spark; but they all agree in never being forgotten, and there indeed a visioned wonder lies! To illustrate this theory not only of the words and tones which dart an instant's sunshine through the heart, but also of innumerable other *motives* which startle us indeed through every sense, sometimes with terror, and often with no definite feeling, I may mention that when I was seven or eight years of age, I read a magazine-story of which I remember nothing but this, that the heroine, whoever she was, beheld

in a critical moment of awe—I think it was in some profound abyss or whirling eddy in an ocean storm—"a small white hand pointing tremulously upwards;" which I have cited elsewhere, I believe. This never vanished from my memory; nay, I am sure no week has ever passed since that dark rainy Sunday afternoon, when I in the dining-room tried to forget gloom in a bound volume of the *Philadelphia Portfolio* of 1831, that it has not risen before me. I regret to say that at the time I vaguely confused "tremulously" with "tremendously;" but 'twas of no consequence; perhaps that made it all the more terrible.

I am reminded of this undying memory by the discovery that the naiad or spirit of the stream which runs before my window as I write—that is to say, the Arno—also appears in the form of a female hand. It is perhaps in the nature of things, or secondarily innate creativeness, that this should be so, for I believe that it is to be found in some form in the literature or folk-lore of every land. It is told very prettily how, in the olden time in Norway, the spirit of the river, *Huldra*, was wont to receive from her human friends what we may call a Christmas-cake. Now it befell on a time that a fisherman brought his cake, but could not throw it into the stream because the latter was frozen very thickly. Then he toiled to make a hole, but could only bore a very small opening, not large enough to admit the cake. So he laid his gift on the ice, and watched at a distance to see what would befall. When lo! there came mysteriously winding up from below a very beautiful *small white hand.*

"Little indeed it was,
Small as the hand of Freya;
She the all-beautiful,
White as snow,
Pinked by early morning shine.
Seizing the cake-offering,
It drew it down through the hole,
All shrinking to a thread in narrowness:
So the *Huldra*
Got her offering."

Hence came the proverb paid in Norway to a lady when one says that she has a hand like a water-spirit.[1] One of the most striking pictures in the *Morte d'Arthur* is that of the hand which rises from the mere and catches the great sword Excalibur.

As may be supposed, I did not behold here and there in Florence mysterious ancient images of hands rising above the surface of a stream without conjecturing that in them a legend lay hidden. And *per Bacco*, or Pan, the master of all mysteries! one may safely wager all the bank-bills that in his pocket lie, on finding a tradition old and strange in Florence, on less evidence than this. So I soon obtained the following, even as is here given, save what is in parentheses:

The Spirit of the Arno.

"There was a man long ago, who had the fancy to sit for hours by the Arno and watch its waters. In those days the river was much larger than at present, for the Mugnone was a part of it, and the freshets or inundations were terrible, and covered even the Piazza della Signoria; and after great rains they came so rapidly that many were drowned ere they could escape.

"One day this man had a gold piece; other money he had none in the world. But he was not one of whom you could say *Poverta fa l'uomo vile*—poverty makes a man mean, but rather, *Poverta non guasta gentilezza*—poverty does not debase nobility. For as he sat, he saw, to his amazement, a small white hand, like a woman's, rise from the water and stretch out to him its open palm as if begging. Whereupon he threw to it his gold coin, which was caught, and the hand waved a sign which said, 'I thank you,' as plainly (as if with polite words).

"On an evening soon after, as he sat by the river, he saw the hand again, which rose from the stream surrounded by a watery cloud (or, as it were, a wreath of rolling water), and it beckoned to him with rapid movements to follow in haste. So he rose and went on after it, and it led him to the corner

[1] *Das Ausland*, 1835, No. 263.

of the Via dei Neri, in the Piazza di San Remigio, where it rose from the level of his eyes to two *bracchie* or fathoms or more, and with its forefinger drew a line of light.

"Then the man understood that a great flood was to come and rise to that height, and he asked if it was to be so, and soon?

"And the hand, as in a great hurry or distress, signified that it would come at once, and so vanished. The man made a great alarm, and all who believed in him at once removed their goods and families to places of safety. And when the flood came, it was such as never was seen before, and it was said that no man had ever done so much good, or saved so many lives, as he of whom I write. (And in memory of this, there was carved on the spot where the hand had drawn the line an image of it with an inscription, stating that in the year 1433, on the 4th of December, the water of the Arno had risen to that height, which stone may be there seen to this day.)"

The second legend is as follows, and as literally translated.

Lo Spirito dell' Arno.

"This spirit appears as a white hand, which makes a sign to those who are in danger (*Che vanno incontro qualche pericolo*).

"This hand will, when any one is a true believer in such spirits, place itself on him, and push him back from danger. And if the man in fright jumps backwards, and so falls into the water, the hand will hold him up and draw him ashore, or, if he be senseless, will bear him to the Via dei Neri and Piazza di San Remigio, where the *renaioli* mostly live, and there you can see the hand carved on a stone.[1]

"And that same hand beats at the doors of those *renaioli*, and a voice calls out and bids them rise and haste when any one of them or theirs is in danger, and then they see the hand go before as guide, making signs. However, they do not see it as a hand alone, but as a person.[2]

[1] The *renajoli*, as is elsewhere mentioned, are men who dig sand out of the bed of the Arno. They would be naturally the protégés of the spirit of the river.

[2] This is obscure. Perhaps on such occasions the spirit, as in the carving on the Ponte Vecchio, appears at full length. The hand is only seen and the voice heard by the *renaioli*, which renders the motto by Tickell strangely appropriate.

"And it often happens that when there is dire need of great haste, the *renaioli* find themselves borne in a moment to the Arno, they know not how. And it is by the virtue of that spirit they find themselves at the Arno in time to save the sufferer—*senza avere neppure camminato*—without having walked."

That the *Wegweiser* or indicator of a notice should be a hand is very natural, even as we see it commonly put on posts at cross-roads. But that it was anciently identified with a local spirit is very evident from the fact that on the Ponte Vecchio there is on one side a sculptured stone of the fourteenth century commemorating the rehabilitation of the bridge, to which the hand points; while on the other there is one of the same kind, on which there is not only a hand, but with it the entire figure of a youth, who is referred to in the text. It is true that a boy is not a girl, but it might pass for one with the populace, who cannot read Latin nor Gothic lettering. The very significant reference to the boy in connection with the statement in reference to the inundation indicates, in connection with this legend, that the boy was a warning spirit; for in sober fact, if there be not a mysterious (though then commonly understood) allusion to a spirit or fairy of the stream in the statuette, there can be no meaning in the reference at all.

The Gothic inscription referred to is original and perfect, but the boy is a restoration or copy, and has been inserted. The inscription in modern letters is as follows:—

ANNO MILLENO TER CENTŪ; TER QUOQUE DE ENO ET TRIBUS ADJUNCTIS IN QUARTA LUCE NOVEMBRIS TURBINE LIMPHARUM MULTARUM CORRUIT HIC PONS POSTEA MILLENIS TER CENTUM QUEM QUE NOVERIS PULCHRIOR ORNATUS FAS FUIT ET RENOVATUS, HIC PUER OSTENDIT BREVITER QUE FC̃A FUERIT.

It is remarkable that while the spirit of the stream

in Tuscan legend is loving and benevolent, the *Kelpie* and *Eigir* of Celtic or Danish origin in Great Britain is a gloomy and destructive fiend; nor are the Lurlei nymph and Necke of Germany and Sweden any kinder. The most eerie or uncanny form of this grim goblin was found by my friend John Sampson in the strange *Shelta* language spoken by Celtic tinkers and similar wanderers. It was called *Glox Sharog na Srōina*, the Red Man of the Boyne. This is a spirit who appears like a blood-red man with a winding-sheet round his head. Sometimes he rises from the water thrice, then sinks, and each time calls the name of a certain man. At the third summons, the one called comes running, and, impelled by an irresistible influence, plunges into the water and is drowned. It is worth noting that this Shelta tongue has been fully proved to be the mysterious language of the bards and magicians, which was lost for a thousand years, and only very recently recovered. Even the legends in it partake of a marvellous character.

To which Flaxius adds:

"Regarding the great inundations of this city, it is worth noting that a certain Florentine in the olden time remarked that it was a great pity that the Arno was not always extremely ill or even at death's door. And being asked why, he replied, 'Because whenever it rises from its bed, it always does a great deal of mischief.'

"And it is a proverb of a churlish man, that if the Arno were overflowing with broth he would not give a drop to one starving. Another in reference to the dryness of its bed, which is all stones in summer, says of idle work, ''Tis like seeking mushrooms in the Arno'—*E come cercar de funghi in Arno;* also *E non l'empierebbe l'Arno*—'The Arno would not fill him,' which is the equivalent of *E non l'empierebbe questo mondo, e quell' altro.*

> "'This world and the next would never satisfy
> That man, nor all his feelings gratify.'

"And finally—as all ye who visit Florence will pass over the

Ponte Vecchio—I pray ye, gentles, of your courtesy to pause and consider these inscriptions, and the image of the spirit of the stream, and the unearthly hand—giving therewith one kindly, grateful thought to Maddalena, who unearthed the tradition, and likewise one to him who wrote it down!"

THE RED PILLARS OF THE BAPTISTERY

"And porphyry which in the earliest time
Was the red flesh of Titans petrified,
From which great Hermes made a mirror strange,
Wherein men saw, as ye may see in pools,
Dark shadowy shapes foretelling things to come."—C. G. L.

"Ferrentur quoque in festo Johannis Bapt. brandæ et faces ardentes et fiunt ignes qui significant St. Johannem qui fuit lumen et lucerna ardens præcedens et præcursor veræ lucis."—BELETH, *Summa de Divinis Officiis.*

ALL who have been in Florence, and owned a Murray's Guide Book, have read therein that "at each side of the eastern entrance of the Battistero di San Giovanni there is a shaft of red porphyry, presented by the Pisans in 1117." Other accounts state that the Florentines attached immense value to these columns, and that once when there was to be a grand division of plunder between Florence and Pisa, the people of the former city preferred to take them instead of a large sum of money or something which was far more valuable. And the Pisans parted from them most unwillingly, and to deprive them of value passed them through a fire. Which is all unintelligible nonsense, but which becomes clear when we read farther.

I had spoken of this to Mr. W. De Morgan, the distinguished scholar, artist, and discoverer in ceramics, when he informed me that he had found in the *Cronaca Pisana* of Gardo, a passage which clearly explains the whole. It is as follows:

"In the year 1016 the Pisans brought the gates of wood which are in the Duomo, and a small column which is in the façade or above the gate of the Duomo. There are also at the

chief entrance two columns, about two fathoms each in length, of a reddish colour, and it is said that whoever sees them is sure that day not to be betrayed.[1] And these two columns, which were so beautiful, had been so enchanted by the Saracens, that when a theft had been committed, the face of the thief could be seen reflected in them. And when they had scorched them they sent them to Florence, after which time the pillars lost their power. Whence came the saying, *Fiorentini ciechi*—the blind Florentines."

Unto which was added, *Pisani traditori*, or "treacherous Pisans." Those pillars were, in fact, magic mirrors, which had acquired their value or power by certain ceremonies performed when they were first polished, and which were lost. The merely passing them through fire to ruin them is absurd; a few days' work would restore their gloss even now. And so the Pisans spoiled them out of spite—never reflecting that the pillars would stand as a monument of their shame and a proof of their treachery for a thousand years. Truly in this world it is far more honourable, and generally more profitable in the end, to be cheated than to cheat.

I concluded, very naturally, that among my witch friends unto whom there were legends of sorcery in every lane, and graphic tales of ghosts at every corner of Florence, something regarding the Red Pillars of St. John would not be wanting. Nor was I disappointed, for inquiry promptly brought forth the following remarkable narrative by Maddalena, which I translated literally as I could with great trouble, as it was much confused. The old palace Vecchietti, subsequently called, if I am not mistaken, after La Cavolaia, or in my MS. *Della Cavallaria*, has disappeared since this chapter was written.

[1] *Quel die non puo essere tradito.* In a wide sense, not injured by any one or in any way. The same belief was attached to pictures or images of St. Christopher.

LE COLONNE DI SAN GIOVANNI.

"These columns were called in ancient times *Le Colonne Magiche*, or Magic Pillars, because the *Fate*[1] had enchanted them with a magic wand.

"When a witch or *fata* died without having appointed a successor, then all the wicked witches and *fate* met in grand council at midnight, and their place of resort was in the underground vaults or *Sotterranea* of the Palazzo della Cavallaria. And they chose this place because those who dwelt therein had ever been very rich and of extremely evil fame.

"In this palace were given grand festivals, which were frequented by the noblest and greatest of the aristocracy, and among these were many witches, wizards, and *fate*. When these lords and ladies entered the palace, (many) of them never came out again, for it was full of pitfalls.

"Opposite this palace was a gardener's widow who sold many cabbages, whence she was called La Cavolaia. And this woman beheld many go in who never came forth again, but whenever she would speak of this to any one, there always rose before her a form which gazed at her, and then her voice failed her and she could not utter a word. And this form was the spirit of one of the dead masters in that palace, and he had been in life a *capo stregone* or arch-wizard.

"One day a good *fata* was passing by this palace, when she heard sounds and songs, which caused her to stop as if enchanted. She stopped and said, 'Those are sounds of sorcery, and I would like to know what secret society this can be.'[2] So she went to La Cavolaia and asked her what she knew about the palace.

"The Cavolaia related how it was visited by a great *ristograzia* or numbers of the great folk, how there was music, song, dancing, counts, marquises, barons, dukes, and princes and pages, who entered the palace, but when she was about to

[1] *Fate*. A difficult word to translate. It means always a supernatural female being, a dignified fairy of life — or a *peri*, and is *incorrectly* applied to fairies in general. Latin, *fata*. There are *fate* and sorcerers both good and bad, and in this story the different kinds are described as thwarting each other's projects. It appears from other sources that the progressive witch after death became a kind of *fata*, and the *fata*, though very long lived, also died, and then became a higher spirit, *folletto* or *dia*.

[2] In reference to the peculiar and marked intonation with which incantations are repeated, Miss Lister has told me that when her nurse would teach her a spell, she was always taken to some place where no one could hear them.

add—"who never came out again," there suddenly appeared before her a cat who gazed at her, and she could not speak a word.

"Then this *fata* understood that some one had there died who was a great wizard, who had not been able to leave his sorcery to anybody, nor bequeath his great wealth; and therefore he was driven in his rage and despair to continually sacrifice people who entered the palace, — and thus whoever entered could never go forth again, because the palace was enchanted. Those who entered by one gate could only leave by the same, but the interior of the palace revolved or turned round, yet no one observed this, and when the deluded guest thought he was stepping through the door by which he had come into the street, he fell into an oubliette (*trabocchetto*), where he starved to death.

"So when they, after the feast and music and dancing were at an end, sought to leave by the door at which they entered, they found themselves in an oubliette, and so remained in the cellars where the evil sorcerers met.

"Then this good *fata* went to the queen of the *fate* and to the chief of the good sorcerers, and took counsel of them, and they decided to hold their meeting in that palace.

"At midnight they went to the Cavolaia, and told her that by command of the first column of St. John—the magic wand of the queen of the *fate*—that she should inform the authorities (*la giustizia*), so that such mischief should cease. And they added:

"'By command of the second column, which is the magic wand (*bachetta del comando*) of the chief sorcerer, we command thee to reveal the secrets of the palace, because these lords cannot endure what they suffer, and because their hour of death does not come unto them.'

"So the next morning the Cavolaia remained long in bed, and did not go until a late hour into her shop, at which her visitors being astonished, asked her if she was ill. And she replied, 'No, not ill, but I slept. And being a woman, ye know that I, like all women, am very curious.

"'Now for a long time I have seen this palace constantly illuminated, and heard from it sounds of entrancing music and dancing, and saw great lords and ladies enter, but many never came forth again, and marvelled what mystery could be in the palace, and if it were not enchanted. And noting the people who were before my shop, I saw that a certain cat

never left me, and it seemed as if the festivals did not please it, because at midnight it always left the palace, and it was the only being which did so, and it remained till morning. And if ye would prove this, come to-night when it is dark, and see for yourselves. And justice should have a hand in this, for of late many people have been missing in our Florence, and no one knows where they are gone. So I hope that to-night all will be discovered.'

"And as there were among the people who thus discussed the matter several guards (or police), the latter were all advised, and came that night to see the cat, but they could not approach the shop of the Cavolaia because the evil *fata* had strewn a powder to prevent their approach. So the guards and their officers disguised as great lords went to the entrance-gate and rang, but no one opened. Then came the fairy, who in the form of a cat showed them the way into the palace, and thus they arrested all whom they found there, forbidding any one to leave the place, looking closely to see if there were no pit-falls or oubliettes. And they found them full of fragments of human bodies, with others still warm and entire; and so these sorcerers and murderers were arrested and condemned, and such of their prisoners as remained alive were saved, and those who were freed owed it to the good offices of the Cavolaia, for it was owing to her discovery that the guards arrived in time to save them. So they returned home, and took care ever after to fall into no more traps.

"It was now thought that the troubles of this palace were over, and after a long time it was let out to poor people, and as it was of great size with many rooms, many families occupied it. The great carousers (*viventi*) who had lived there before the discovery had departed, but not the spirits, for these had remained there continually, and even unto this day[1] those who dwell therein hear strange sounds and see strange sights.

"And after all this had taken place, all the good fairies and witches met in council in this palace called the Cavolaia, and they summoned the wizard who had gone forth in the form of a cat, and asked him why these people were murdered who had entered into the palace. And thereupon he told them that he had been the owner of the palace, which had been left him as a legacy by a friend, but with the palace had passed the gift

[1] 1890.

of witchcraft. Before this legacy he had been a poor man, and his rich friend while dying asked him 'To whom shall I leave *It*?' He having no suspicion that witchcraft was a part of the heritage said, 'Leave it to me.' Which having said, he heard a great noise, the dying man sank down into the earth, and the heir discovered that he was a wizard. There was a special condition attached to this inheritance of witchcraft, which was that every day he must take a human life, and whoever inherited from him was bound to do the same.[1]

"On hearing this, the fairies and witches went to the columns of San Giovanni, which were their magic wands, which were to them then as resplendent and reflecting as glass. They struck one column three times, and it became like a mirror, and by what they saw therein they took counsel as to what they should do. And so in that glass there appeared to them the figures of men and women, witches or fairies, or even the devil, when they wished to speak to him, or else inscriptions or written answers.

"So they went to these columns to know what should be done to the wizard, who was condemned by his fate to murder so many men, and who was unable to find any one who would take his witchcraft. He himself had intended to leave it to a female servant, one in his own palace, and thus he would be free to quit the palace. On the brightness of the column was inscribed the words—

"'Lasciate la dare a quella donna,
Che verra nostra compagna."

"'Let him give it to her, and she
Shall be one of our company.'

"Now this servant who had lived in the palace in the service of those who had been condemned had left it. But one day the wizard appeared before her and said, 'Will you inherit from me?' and she answering 'Yes,' it was all-sufficient, and she at once became a witch, and that one of the evil kind who pass their nights in doing wrong to everybody; but she being good, was averse to injuring any one.

"And so on the Eve of the Feast of St. John she tied an

[1] In another legend of the same palace, we are told that once in every generation, the son or daughter, with his or her wife or husband, must commit suicide.

image of the saint to her hat, and placed herself between the two columns and said:

"'O San Giovanni benigno!
Tu che davanti la tua chiesa,
Tiene due colonne digne,
Che di li si sa il ben e il male!
Sono due bachette magiche,
Le fate e strege che qui commandono
A queste colonne sono tutte buone,
E sono le protetrici dei fanciulli
E levano molte stregonerie,
Molte sempre per molte persone,
Ma a quello birbante non hanno potuto levare
Che a me l'ha lasciato
Che a lui posse ritornare!'

"'O benign Saint John!
Thou who hast before thy church
Two columns worthy of honour,
Whose good and evil power are so well known!
They are two magic wands,
The fairies and the witches who command
These columns are not of the evil kind;
For they protect the children of the town
And turn aside all evil sorcery,
And do for many people often good,
Yet had no power to take from that vile wretch
The evil heritage he left to me.
I pray that it may be returned to him!'

"And so the poor witch resisted bravely. When lo! there came a mighty wind which bore her far away, till at last she found herself in a great tree and well freed from witchcraft.

"But the wizard, who found himself in the same case as before, for revenge took away from the pillars all their power, so that since that day all their virtue has departed from them."

This is indeed a wild tale of sorcery, such as is preserved only among witches. But its antiquity is amply corroborated by correlative testimony. For it firstly corresponds to the chronicle of Gardo in many particulars, and secondly it agrees with the popular belief that St. John himself was very strangely identified with sorcery, though not of the evil kind. There are witches good and bad, as among the Romans, and the two kinds are distinctly defined in this story. It is not declared in the

legend, but it is evident that the servant-girl heiress remained a witch, albeit one who had shaken off the evil part of her inheritance.

Since the foregoing was written, I have obtained, in all, *six* legends, several of great length, all relating to the *palazzo* Vecchietti, or Cavolaia, and the origin of the *Diavolino* of Giovanni di Bologna. They form, as it were, a series or *cyclus* of stories, which, as they are told or chanted, might be conceived as a witch epic, for none of them have anything in common with ordinary fairy tales. In all of them, but especially in a very strange one, "The Ghetto," of twenty-five MS. pages, there is to be found curious illustration of witch-psychology; that is, of the transmission of destiny in families, and the doctrine that the sins of the parents are visited on the children, but with the very important qualification that the children receive with the fated destiny certain talents, or great wealth. I may here observe that these different *Diavolino* stories run into and greatly corroborate one another as regards antiquity.

The Eve of St. John is a general festival for witches, but I infer it is only for those who are classed as good; and it is very curious indeed that, for good purposes alone, a witch, as appears from other traditions, may be present at a baptism of an infant in a church of St. John, and that by doing this a portion of the blessing conferred on the infant is transferred to the spell of the witch. Thus, to unbewitch a child under spell of sorcery, it undergoes divers incantations, and is finally carried to a baptism, where a certain spell frees it from all danger. So in this, as in many other instances, the rites of the Church blend with the relics of older heathenism.

The brilliancy of the columns indicates the attribute of light, peculiar to St. John. "The fires lighted on the Eve of this saint were believed to bestow healing power

and protection against sorcery and witchcraft," writes Friedrich.

But there is more to prove the antiquity of the legend. When I read in it that the mirror exhibited either forms and images or writing, I at once understood, as the reader probably surmised, that figures appeared in the one and letters on the other. In reference to which I find the following very appropriate passage in that rare work, *Der Verworffener Hexen und Zauberadvocat*, Hamburg, 1701, by Peter Goldschmidt:

"Yet there are different kinds of magic mirrors, as we may see by Paracelsus, Lib. 5, *de Speculi Constitutione apud Bubalum*, Caspar Schottius, and others. In some we can see the forms of *thieves* or enemies, in others that of animals, . . . while in another we behold not forms, but only *words*, advice, *consilia*. To such mirrors Bodinus assigns that of Lenticus (261), translated by some as the stone of imagination; and according to Bodinus it was an admirably polished *stone*, in which the heathen, after due prayers, beheld future events, and these polished idolatrous stones were the same which God-forgetting sinners use to-day as magic crystals and magic mirrors."

The red columns probably came from Constantinople, as the Pisan chronicler states that they were charmed by the *Saracens*, and Goldschmidt goes on at once to say that a certain Peter Corsa, being in that city, consulted one of these polished stones or mirrors, and beheld in it, to his horror, that which would give ground for a divorce in any court. It would be strange if the porphyry pillars of St. John had been the mirrors consulted by Corsa. The conclusion of which is plain, that the tradition as told me in Florence must be very ancient in all its details, else whence did the narrator derive all these particulars which agree so very curiously with the beliefs expressed by old writers?

It was not till after I had written the above that I learned from that excellent work *Walks in Florence and*

its Environs, by Susan and Joanna Horner, that the *Chavolaja* was already in record on type as follows:

"There is in the Baptistery of St. John a tomb with a Latin inscription in old Gothic characters in memory of Ranieri, Bishop of Florence, and the monument itself is only curious because it is the subject of a Florentine tradition. A woman, who had made a fortune by the sale of vegetables, and was known in Florentine dialect as the *Cavolaja*, or cabbage-wife, bequeathed money to have the bells of Ogni Santi and of the Cathedral annually rung from November 1 to the last day of Carnival, for the benefit of her soul. Her memory was held in much respect by her townspeople, who believe that in some unaccountable manner her bones rest in the sarcophagus of Bishop Ranieri, whose tomb has therefore been called, 'La Tomba della Cavolaja.'"

The magical palace of the story was standing till very recently in the Mercato Vecchio, and it was called the Palazzo Vecchi or Vecchietti. It would naturally enough be popularly connected with sorcery and diablerie, since on its corner was placed a marvellous bronze figure of a fiend, a devil, which is even now more copied and imitated by wood-carvers than any other work in Florence. Of all which we read as above:

"The street which leads west from the market to the Strozzi Palace is called the Via Ferriecchi (*Old Iron Street*), and old iron is still exposed for sale in this quarter. A handsome palace at the corner of the Via Ferriecchi and the Via de' Vecchietti is popularly known as the 'Palazzo della Cavolaja'—the Palace of the Cabbage-woman, and was probably the residence of the *Cavolaja* whose reputed tomb is in the Baptistery. The inscription over some of the windows informs the passers-by that the original inhabitants were Vecchietti, Here Bernardo Vecchietti, a patron of art, received and entertained Giovanni da Bologna for two years, when he came an unknown artist from Boulogne in France. This generous hospitality afforded him time to make himself known and to commence his artistic career in Florence. Giovanni da Bologna made the bronze figure of the devil at the corner of this house, where once stood a pulpit from which Piero Martire preached when he

was said to have exorcised the fiend, who galloped past in the shape of a black horse. The family of the Vecchietti are among the oldest in Florence, and are mentioned as such by Dante:

"'E vidi quel de' Nerli, e quel del Vecchio
Esser contenti alla pelle scoverta;
E le sue donne al fuso e al pennechio.'

"'I saw De' Nerli and Del Vecchio,
Contented even with uncovered skin,
Their women with the distaff and the flax.'
—DANTE, *Paradiso*, xv. 115.

The arms of the Vecchietti, five ermines of silver on a blue ground, are often seen in Florence. The people naturally believe they are white rats; hence a saying of any one who was growing old that he was taking the arms of the Rat family. What with hoar antiquity, rats, the devil in their corner, the horrible Mercato Vecchio all round them, and the mysterious cabbage-woman over the way, it is no wonder that the family fell into suspicion of sorcery and of having a house which turned round and round inside, an idea taken probably from some kind of "tumbletrap," by means of which they dropped tiresome visitors into the oubliette; for there was such a *vade in pace!* or go in peace! in the Palazzo Vecchio.

Another curious tradition relative to the red pillars which I picked up among fortune-tellers is as follows:

LE COLONNE DI SAN GIOVANNI.

"In the columns of San Giovanni there is still an ancient chain or iron band of which it is said that when one is going to baptize an infant, one should stop before the pillars and say:

"'O catena tu
Che tiene una virtu,
E a tutti non e noto
La tua gran virtu.
Questo figlio vengo battezare
E a te prima mi vengo a racommandar
Che di questo figlio
Tu non ti possa dimenticare.'

"'O wondrous iron band,
Who hast a virtue true,
Gifted with mystic power.
Although 'tis known to few!
I bring this child to you and say,
That first of all to you I pray,
And from this child,
So meek and mild,
Let not thy blessing pass away.'

"Then take a small piece of coral, and for three days put it *in croce* or on and across the iron band, and at the end of the three days hang it on the neck of the child, and St. John will protect it from evil spirits and witches and disasters, and ever bring it good luck."

Some one has driven a horse-shoe nail between the band and stone of the pillar at the right hand of the gate. This was done for luck, also to commemorate certain events. It was usual in ancient times to annually drive nails in the temple of the Etruscan goddess Nortia, and the peasantry of the Romagna Toscana still do so into doors with a special incantation.

"Over which whole chapter," appends Flaxius, "I, shaking my head slowly and gravely, would fain a solemn commentary make. When the great Washington Irving published the second edition of his immortal *Knickerbocker's History of New York*, he observed as a wondrous instance of simple faith that divers of the descendants of the worthy Dutchmen described in his chronicle plumed themselves greatly on the fact that their ancestors had been mentioned therein, regarding themselves as being thereby inscribed in a kind of *Libro d'Oro*, and so to speak ennobled. Which was indeed only a subtle satire, since of these same descendants many were so irate that they would not allow the book to be brought into their houses; I having known of a family who held to this within a few years.

"Even as it befell that a great authority, whom many term the King of the Folk-lorists, having called this our author "The Duke of Dark Corners," "An Encyclopædia of the Out-of-the-way," a man who knew everything *not* worth knowing, and "more Dutchy as de Dutches demselfs," found just one person in all Europe who regarded this in child-like faith as a compliment

—this man being the man himself who was thus described—the result being, to judge from the foregoing chapter—and alas! too many more like unto it!—a grateful determination to merit the eulogium, as he supposed it to be, and to dig even more deeply into the dust-heaps and rubbish-rooms of antiquity and humanity. *Ou diable va la vanité se nicher!* There is a French author who has enumerated strange instances of criminals who attached the idea of honour to what few would consider a matter of pride—but they knew that the world thought differently. This writer—*O sancta simplicitas!*—knows nothing but *work;* and I really believe that when he reads these remarks of mine he will not understand one word thereof!

"Columns—magic mirrors—horse-shoes, and the Street of Old Iron shops! Let us drink!"

STORIES OF FIESOLE

THE DENS OF THE FAIRIES—PIOVANO ARLOTTO AND HIS BOY—LA BELLA BIONDINA

"She came in her beauty bright as day
To where in his sleep her true love lay;
She held in her small and light bright hand
A plaything, a brilliant moon-gold band;
She wound it about her hair and his own,
Still singing the while, 'We two are one!'
All round them the world lay poor and dim,
Aloft in her glory she rose with him;
They stood in a garden fair and bright:
The angels do call it Land of Light."

—La Motte Fouqué.

AUGUSTUS—*nomen et omen*—J. C. Hare has the following in his account of Fiesole in *The Cities of Central Italy:*

"The most important remains of the Etruscan fortifications are on the northern brow of the hill, where they rise to a height of from twenty or thirty feet. Behind the cathedral, in a garden, are some remains of the *Roman* (not Etruscan) *Theatre.* There is not much to see, but it is a charming spot, half buried in flowers. Some of the outer wall and of the seats are visible. Some vaults beneath, of *opus incertum*, are called by the Fiesolani 'Le Buche delle Fate,' or Dens of the Fairies.

"In the *Borgo Unto* is a curious fountain in a subterranean passage approached by a Gothic archway. It is called Fonte Sottera, and its pure waters supply the whole neighbourhood."

As I conjectured, there must be a legend relative to such a place, and Maddalena, having made a special pilgrimage to Fiesole, soon obtained it, and gave it to me in these words, unto which I have nothing added,

neither have I minished, but given all in truth as it was writ. But I may remark in passing, that my collectress, regarding this as a specially holy, or unholy, pilgrimage to a great shrine of witchcraft, made great research, and would appear to have encountered either a small guide-book or a large guide, to judge from the erudition and style displayed in the report.

Le Buche delle Fate.

"These Dens of the fairies are in Fiesole, and are called the Amphitheatre or the Roman Theatre. Behind the Cathedral there is a road going downwards (*sendendo*), at the bottom of which is found to the right the remains of the gigantic Etruscan walls.

"Returning across the open place to the left, we come to the Via delle Cannelle, and in the first farm, also to the left, there is the so-called Roman Theatre. But the people call it *Le Buche delle Fate*, or Fairies' Dens.

"In this farm (*podere*), where these dens are situated, there was at first an Etruscan settlement; it was said to have been a fortress, and when ruined by wars, its remains were, little by little, covered up, till it all formed a hill. And when this was dug away in modern times, they discovered first of all the remains of walls, and then three arches, and finally a fountain. And this was called the House of the Fairies. The basin or fountain was then full of fish, and these fish were all people who had been enchanted into that form (*fatate*).

"The fairy house was then a splendid palace, and there the fairies kept a public school for boys and girls, and this was called the *Squola delle Signore*, or the Ladies' School, and the pupils were so kindly treated that they rejoiced to go there, and grieved when it was time to go home. The parents were, of course, much pleased at this, and were astonished to find that the pupils were all equal (*in proficiency*), and that there was not one who was not glad to go to the Ladies' School.

"For the fairies taught the children different kinds of work, which really enchanted them,[1] and as they learned all this easily, and loved the work, the result was that many became distinguished and successful.

[1] "Queste insegnavano alle bimbi a fare di lavori da rimanere inchantati."

"Now let us leave for a while the fairies and their work, and come to the story:—There was a young lady of noble and wealthy family, who had wedded a *bel signore* of equal condition, and for a time they were deeply devoted. But as often befell then, and happens even now, the very greatness and antiquity of his family made the lord more anxious to continue it, and as this did not come to pass, he became cold to his wife, and then finally cruel. Now this desire to have an heir became in him a single thought, or constant suffering, or lunacy, and as it all turned on his wife, it ended by his wishing her dead, that he might marry another in her place.

"The poor lady had always been very pious and good to the poor, and when her husband began to abuse her, could do nothing but pray and weep, which, making her pale and sorrowful, angered him still more, as if it were another bar in the way. Till, finally, one day returning from the chase, and finding her in tears, he had her forthwith thrown into a dungeon, ordering that she should receive only bread and water, and be so treated that she might soon die, as he had had enough of such a wife.

"Then the lady, reflecting how innocent she was, and how strictly religious and benevolent her life had been, doubted the providence of God, and in despair called to the Evil One for aid; nor was the appeal unheard, for it was followed by a distant peal of thunder, and then by louder and nearer crashes, with flashes of lightning and the clanking of chains, and then appeared a *diavolo* or evil spirit like a courtly, graceful man, clad in black, but surrounded by light and curling blue flames which played about his head like living hair.

"Then the lady in terror repented that she had called him, but without delay he thus addressed her:

> "'I was summoned by thy voice,
> And it made my heart rejoice,
> For I felt that in thy air
> Was my own spirit of despair.
> Thou hast called me from afar,
> E'en from beyond the farthest star,
> Driven by utter agony,
> What wouldst thou, woman, now from me?'

Then the lady took courage and replied:

> "'All that I do ask of thee,
> Is that I may a mother be.'

"And the spirit said:

"'A lovely maid thou soon wilt bear,
With mind and heart beyond compare;
Thus all thy suffering and pain,
Will be made up to thee again;
But I who aid, in consequence,
Must also have my recompense;
For when due time shall pass away,
In fifteen years, then, come what may,
She shall be mine, without delay.'

"But the lady was so possessed with the mad desire to have a child and to resume her place in her husband's heart, that she assented, seeing no other escape from death or way into a happy life, believing that as God had forsaken her, nothing could go worse with her. Then the demon, going to her husband disguised as a wise man, persuaded him that he had been mistaken as to his wife, for it appeared plainly by the planets that if she were taken into favour again she would soon become a mother. Then he, whose whole mind was bent on one thing, had her brought from the dungeon, begged her pardon, and she was soon as happy as ever. Nor did the demon fail to keep his word, for in due time she became the mother of a maid who grew up a girl of incredible beauty and marvellous mind.

"This child, when old enough, was sent to the school of the Ladies, or fairies, who loved her so much, that they, knowing all things, began to consider whether some thing could not be done to save their pupil from the fate which awaited her.

"Now the fairies, having observed that there was a great waste of straw in the country, invented the art of splitting it into lines, and braiding it into all kinds of hats and beautiful objects, which art, indeed, first came from Fiesole, where it is still most perfectly practised. And they taught this art to the little girl, and she made by their directions a square basket in which to carry her luncheon, and on each side there was a figure of a cross in red and black.

"As the fated time of the fifteenth birthday drew near, the mother began to manifest constant anxiety and suffering, and was ever weeping, to the great discomfort of her husband. Then the fairies, who had resolved what to do, spoke thus to the young girl:

"'In a few days, my dear child, thy fifteenth birthday will come, and thou art destined to incur on it a terrible danger,

and on that day thy mother will try to keep thee at home, hoping to have thee by her to the very last. But do thou, come what may, despite everything, make thy escape, and come here to school. But first of all, take this little silver basin, and when thy mother weeps, see that thou canst gather in it fifteen of her tears;[1] nor shalt thou let thy mother know why, for if thou dost we cannot serve thee.'

"And on the morning of her fifteenth birthday the parents of the maid tried to keep her at home; but she poured the fifteen tears into a vial, and took her basket, but instead of luncheon put into it the vial, and so went her way. And arriving at the school, there stood the strange pale signore in black under one of the arches awaiting her; but the fairies, seeing the maid, threw her into the fountain, bidding her, when the demon should attempt to seize her, to throw the tears in his face and say:

> "'For the maiden's fifteen years
> Take her mother's fifteen tears;
> For every year, 'tis plain to see,
> Is worth a year of agony.'

"And when she had done and said this, the defeated devil sank in a rage into the ground, spraying and sputtering out sparks like a grand exhibition of fireworks, with such a roar of thunder as was heard half way to Rome. So the girl was free ('and all went well with all for evermore.')

"And since that time Fiesole has been famous for the straw-work which was first taught by the fairies, as all the old people there know, and to this day, when rabbits are seen running out from the ruins, people say that they are the *fate*."

Of this tale I would first of all remark, that the worthy parents of Fiesole could not have been more astonished than I was when they found that their children, in consequence of being taught the minor industrial arts as a regular branch, became so fond of school that they were sorry to go home; and wonder

[1] An old Roman superstitious custom, still greatly in vogue among Catholics. Miss Read, in her *Six Months in a Convent*, tells us that she was advised to "save up her tears." These little transferences remind one of the Chippeway who, when baptized, affably remarked to his heathen friends, "Me been make fuss-rate good Christian, but me same ole dam Injun still."

upon wonder!—observed that they seemed to be all equally clever.

The reason of this amazement is as follows:—Many years ago, I formed the theory that the minor arts, such as modelling, wood-carving, embroidery, repoussé, leather-work, basket-making, straw-braiding, and so on—there are about two hundred of them capable of being mastered by any amateur, all based on a simple system of design—should form a branch of education in public schools. To this end I worked hard for four years in America, until I had the satisfaction of seeing the system firmly established, not only in the public schools of Philadelphia and New York, but also, by collaborating with Mrs. Richard Jebb, succeeded in establishing the Home Arts and Industries Association, which has quietly but effectively produced such vast results in Great Britain, the original suggestion having been made by me, and the work, as regards Great Britain, having been fully organised with great ability by Mrs. Jebb. All of which is recorded in my work on Practical Education.[1]

Now I had never said a word of all this to Maddalena,—in fact, I should as soon have thought of communicating to her the systems of Mill, Darwin, or Herbert Spencer, or so much as I knew of them, or my reminiscences of Euclid and Hegel, which are much more shadowy; and therefore the reader may imagine my sensation at learning that I had been thus anticipated in the dim and remote past. It was indeed a consolation to learn that it had been done by a constellation of such bright stars as the fairies, who probably inspired me to my work.

Most remarkable of all in it was the observation which I had made, written out in detail and published, that there was developed in the pupils a love of school and

[1] *Vide* "Practical Education," by Charles Godfrey Leland. Whittaker and Co., 2 White Hart Street, London, E.C.

marvellous uniformity of talent or ability; which agreed exactly with my experience.

There is something very pretty in the conception that this first industrial art school was conducted by *fate* in the arches of old Roman ruins in Fiesole, within a minute's walk of what Ariosto declares is a view more beautiful than any in Rome itself—or, more accurately, that if all the palaces in view were collected, Rome would not equal it.

The lady-fairies of England, who now teach straw-braiding and other arts in the classes of the Home Arts and Industries, may be pleased to learn that they had such distinguished and benevolent predecessors, even as I am pleased to know that they show themselves so perfectly worthy to be classed with them.

In addition to the foregoing I give some trifling anecdotes, which are, however, of interest as referring to Fiesole.

There is not much in the following legend beyond a touch of vigorous character; but such as it is, the people of Fiesole keep it in merry remembrance. It is taken from the *Facezie di Piovano Arlotto*, which book abounds in local and folk-loral anecdotes of Florence.

"As everybody knows, Fiesole was one of the old cities of the old world, and there may still be seen many old things, such as the Cathedral and conventual buildings. And in these there dwelt the vicar, who, however good he might have been, was not famed for sense or renowned for wisdom. Before him appeared the parish priest Arlotto, cited by a certain woman, who declared that the Piovano had taken her son, a boy, as *chierico* or church attendant, and had had him for three years, and during all that time had never taught him anything but woman's work, *videlicet:*

"To spread the table.

"To clear the table.

"To cook.

"To wash clothes.

"To scour dishes.

"To sweep the floors.
"To make the beds, and
"To sew and mend garments, &c.

"To which Piovano Arlotto strictly protested that men could do all these things better than women when they tried, and therefore it was all manly work; but to prove that the youth had really had a fine manly education, he called witnesses to prove that the *chierico* had well learned how

"To carve at table.
"To buy meat and other things for household use.
"To curry and harness and otherwise manage horses.
"To cut wood.
"To dig in the garden.
"To catch owls.
"To manage cock-fights.
"To drink the sacramental wine.
"To steal grapes.
"To set snares for hares.
"To play at cards and dice.
"To swear like a trooper, and
"To run after the girls.

"Now, strange as it may seem, the vicar, instead of regarding this as good culture for a youth, thought it extremely evil, and not partaking of a theological character, and ill-beseeming a boy in training to become a clergyman. And considering himself insulted by such a defence, he gave Piovano a bitter scolding, and calling for the beadle, bade him put the culprit in prison. But Arlotto being a stout and strong priest, took the pair, one in each hand, and dragging them to the prison, thrust them in, one after the other, and locking the door, put the key in his pocket and went to find the bishop.

"Now the bishop was a priest not exactly after the order of Melchizedek, but rather after that of Piovano Arlotto himself, that is, *bonus socius*, and what pleased one agreed with the other, or, as the saying is, *dove và la nave può vie il bergantino* —where the ship can sail, there the skiff can row; and having heard the tale, he roared with laughter, and to better the joke, they kept the vicar and the beadle locked up for eight days, when they let them out, and bade them go in peace."

It was doubtless this same *chierico* who once went with Piovano to aid in giving the sacrament to a dying man who was blind of one eye. And when the man had

passed away, the priest said, while returning, that the departed had died more easily than most men. "Yes," answered the youth, "he had only one eye to shut."

Some time after I had written the foregoing, I obtained from Fiesole the following tale, also relative to the Buche delle Fate, of which there are doubtless others current:

La Bella Biondina delle Buche delle Fate.

"There was a great and wealthy signore, who had a son whom he tenderly loved and indulged in everything. Now the youth, wherever he had lived, had never been to Fiesole, but having heard or read much about it and its curious old remains, he persuaded his father to take him there.

"And when they came to the ruins of the Roman amphitheatre, known as the Dens of the Fairies, the youth, gazing through the middle arch, stood as if enchanted or petrified, making no reply or heeding aught, until his father, in great alarm, began to believe that his son was really bewitched. But while he was calling to him in alarm, the boy suddenly came to himself, but with a smile, and heaving a deep sigh as of satisfaction, like one who is well pleased. And he then exclaimed:

"'O father! do you see
That beautiful girl's head,
With beautiful blonde hair,
Which flows like a golden river,
And falls on her exquisite shoulders
In a thousand rings of gold?
White and small are the hands,
Truly the hands of a fairy;
With them she is braiding straw,
And that is the fairies' work.
See how from time to time
Her eyes shoot brilliant glances,
Flashes of sweet enchantment.
Only look at her beauty!
O father! I beg you bring me
Every day to Fiesole,
That I may look at the maiden,
The girl with the golden hair.'

"And hearing this, the father looked to the spot indicated by his son, but could see nothing whatever, and believed that

some spell or delusion was on him. But being very indulgent and kind, and finding that the fancy or infatuation, or whatever it was, remained, he not only brought him to Fiesole every day, but hired a villa near the place, thinking the craze would thus in time wear itself out. For that it was all a whim he was well persuaded, since he himself saw neither blonde nor brunette, nor could he hear a word from any fairy.

"As for the youth, he rose every morning with the dawn, and hastened off to the Dens to talk with the beautiful fairy, at which his father laughed, but beginning to consider it more seriously, at last called in professors learned in mental affliction, to ascertain from them whether his son's mind was affected in any way. But they, after careful examination, declared that there was nothing the matter whatever, and that as regarded the special delusion of the beautiful blonde, it probably was founded on some fact or trick.

"But the father, whose mind was now drawn seriously to the subject, was by no means contented with this decision, and went to consult a *fattuchiera* or sorceress, who lived in Florence in the Via Aretino; and she being interrogated, replied that the youth did not talk nonsense, that his words indicated perfectly good sense, and that there was as certainly a girl with a wonderfully beautiful head of blonde hair with whom he spoke, but how it was, or what it all meant, was to her a mystery.

"Then the signore heard of a very learned astrologer[1] or sorcerer who lived beyond the Porta alla Croce,[2] in the country, and in a small house covered with ivy and different plants. And on knocking at the door, it was opened by a little old man with a very long grey beard, who bade the signore enter, and asked him what he wanted, to which the gentleman gave a full explanation.

"Then the old man lay down with his face upon the ground, and remained for more than three hours in that position without moving or speaking. And when he rose he said:

"'Signore, ere you came to me, you had consulted with learned professors, and also with the witch in the Via Aretino, nor did you put any faith in what they said; yet it was all true so far as they could see, but they did not know the whole mystery, and that I will explain.

[1] *Strolagho.* Not so much an astrologer as a wizard of any kind.
[2] A quarter in which witches even now abound.

"'And, firstly, understand that your son is of sound mind, but that he is suffering for your sin. For you, too, once loved long ago, and from that came something which will cause you many tears.

"'It is now long, long ago
Since you were beloved by a maiden,
A girl with fair blonde tresses,
A glory of golden hair,
A pupil of the fairies,
A braider of straw at Fiesole,
Who loved you beyond belief.
Say dost thou remember?
By her you had a daughter,
And then, as men do, you left her.
She came to you and said:
"Will you take heed to the child?"
And you refused her request.
Say dost thou remember?
And she answered, "I soon shall die,
And you on my dying day
Will be wedded to another,
And she will bear you a son.
See here! for I have woven
A charm which I learned from the fairies;
Your hair with straw inplaited,
Braided into a frame.
In it your fate is woven,
And bitter your fate will be;
For the son to be born of your wife
Will fall in love with his sister,
And love her even to death,
And die for love of her beauty,
Not knowing that she is his sister;
But my daughter indeed will know it,
Yet dare not betray the secret,
From mercy to her brother;
But soon the pair, tormented
By love, and your sin and sorrow,
Will pass away from earth
Unto the brighter land,
Where all may love for ever,
Love in beauty and truth.
Say, dost thou remember?'

"Then the signore all at once recalled what had utterly passed away from his memory, and he returned to his home exhausted with affliction, nor could he eat or sleep.

"And in the night he heard a very sweet voice singing to his son and to him:

"'Affaciato, Alfonso, al tuo balcon,
Se vuoi sentire una bella canzon,
Vai da tuo padre e dilli cosi,
Che te la dia un bacio, tu devi parti,
Tu devi parti, tu devi parti,
Perche senza la tua
Testa' hina bionda, tu devi mori!
Dalle un addio anche per me
Benche fosse crudele versa di me.'

"'Oh, come to thy window, nor linger too long,
Alfonso! I'll sing thee a beautiful song;
And go to thy father, and say without fear
That I send him a kiss. Thou must wander, my dear,
Thou must leave this sad world, dear, and wouldst thou know why?
Without thy blonde darling thou surely wouldst die;
Yes, bid him farewell, dear, though true it may be
That he was too cruel, too cruel to me.'

"Then the signore went to his son's room, and found him dead, but with a smile on his face. And soon after, being all alone in the world, he too died."

Though I have not translated it well, there is in the original of this song an indescribable blending of sadness, sweetness, and gaiety, such as I have never met with except in one of Mendelssohn's "Songs without Words." The pair are departing for a happier world, and cannot be sad, though they feel the sadness of the past and the fearful sorrow and paradox of life. It may be observed that in the tale the mother and daughter speak as one, and that the mother speaks for both.

Another tale of fair Fiesole shows it a holy old Etruscan spot, haunted by a spirit of the dawning time—which is indeed a most appropriate word, because the fairies of "the dayspring from on high" play an even more important part in the early Tuscan mythology than in the Aryan Sanskrit legends of the gods.

Genzio.

"There lived in Fiesole a magician named Genzio, who was a man by day and a woman by night, but, as the former, he delighted to roam through rural scenes, cities and mountains, floods and fields especially where there were horses, in which

he took great delight, as well as cattle of all kinds, and these he could depict as an artist with rare skill. And all the maids of Fiesole adored Genzio, because he had taken their photographs.[1]

"And one day, when he was buried in thought in his garden, he was roused from his reverie by a light touch, and looking up, saw a very beautiful blonde girl, who, evidently in great distress, begged permission to consult him. But he replied:

"'Daughter mine, it may not be
That thou canst walk alone with me,
Nor would thy mother deem it fit
That thou with me i' the house shouldst sit:
For I not only am a man,
But more than that, a magian;
Girls should of such as I beware,
Nor fall into a sorcerer's snare.'

"As he said this, she had in her hand straw which she was braiding, and as Genzio spoke the last word, the straw turned into a beautiful vase of flowers, which gave forth an exquisite odour, which was perceptible afar off. And the maid was amazed, but she presently added:

"'Truly, I ne'er dreamed, good sir,
That you were a conjurer:
Yet, indeed, if one you be,
'Tis the better far for me;
Therefore, I beg leave to come
For a season to your home,
And when you've heard what I would say,
You will not bid me haste away!'

"Then she went on to say to him:

"'As a sorcerer thou must know
What evil deeds men do below,
And how the wicked Medici,
Lords of yon city, woe is me!
And lords of all on every side,
Abuse their power far and wide—
A power which no law can stem:
Great wrong must I endure from them!'

"Then Genzio replied that she should return to him in secrecy and by night. And when she came, she was amazed at being received by a beautiful *fata*. But she told her tale,

[1] The ordinary Tuscan peasant has no idea that photography is not as ancient as the Tarquins.

how the Medici had imprisoned (*calcerato*) her father, and threatened to put him to death unless she would surrender herself to their Lord Cosimo, and that this was the last night and limit of the time allowed her.

"And Genzio having heard this replied, 'Rest in peace here, and I will provide for all.' So she remained, but Genzio went to her *castello* and put on her very form; her own mother would have thought he was her daughter, not a golden hair was missing. And at midnight there came the guards and ruffians (*sgherri*) of the Medici and took her to their master. And when she appeared before him, he gazed on her with admiration, which changed into great awe and dread at what he soon beheld. For from a maiden of resplendent beauty she changed to a very tall, stately, and dignified man of commanding presence. He had a very heavy long black curling beard, with flowing black robes, and on his head was a circlet of gold, surmounted by a star of dazzling light. In a voice which inspired fear he said, pointing at the Grand Duke:

"'Thou evil, corrupt, and thrice-accursed prince! how far wilt thou go in this career,[1] to leave behind a name which will be for thee and thine, as a record of shame for ever? Thou, who shouldst be the father and protector of thy servants, hast become their scourge and betrayer. Yet a little more, and the evil days will come upon thee, and there will be wailing in thy palaces and remorse in thy heart, and over all Christendom thou wilt be called the Vile. Yet that thy punishment may be put off for a few days, I bid thee at once set free the father of this girl and her, and give them ample recompense for what they have suffered; but if this be not done, woe unto thee, since refusing, in that hour thou diest.'

"Then Cosimo di Medici, struck by mortal fear and remorse, did as Genzio bade him, and the maid was restored to peace and great prosperity."

What is first of all very remarkable in this story is the name *Genzio*. I have shown in the *Etruscan-*

[1] "'Quousque tandem abutere Catalina patientia nostra?" Note that I translate the whole of this tale word for word as I received it, without any paint or varnish of my own; and assuredly neither Maddalena nor her informant had ever read Cicero. "Perhaps," notes Flaxius "'tis a case of heredity, and it may be that the blood of Cicero rolls in the veins of these thy Tuscan scribes! And there were doubtless those among their ancestors who had listened with rapture to the great Latin orator."

Roman Legends that there is a Tuscan spirit of horses named *Ganzio* who lives in stables, and who is almost beyond question the Latin Consus. And it is remarkable that the very first assertion made relative to Genzio is that he roams all over the country to see horses and cattle.

In the *magus* who is a woman by night and a man by day, we have the superstition, still often heard about Rome, that there are magicians who are thus of two sexes, and that there are charms by which it can be effected—and I will give anon one of the latter. But there can be no doubt that this conception comes from two-headed Janus, and the Gnostic Templar Baphomet, with male and female heads, which became the *Prudentia* or Discretion of all Christian symbolism, and which may be found as such on the shrine of Orcagna in Or' San Michele, and also on the door of the Baptistery.

Genzio—not Ganzio—also appears as an artist, and there is an invocation to him in this capacity. But as he is distinctly a sylvan deity or cousin to the fauns, he is only invoked by a *paysagiste*, a landscaper who desires to paint castles, valleys, rock and river, mountains and plains. Believing, however, that invocations and charms are generally skipped, I for space-sake skip this. Devout artists desiring to worship the god may obtain it by writing to me and gracefully paying postage. Maddalena, it is true, will supply to all applicants:

> "Many an ancient incantation
> For a moderate compensation,"

—but she, poor soul, must always plead *in forma pauperis*, witches, like poets, being ever poor.

It is worth noting, that as Ganzio or Genzio is a god of horses, and also male and female, so Loki in the Northern mythology was once a mare and once a woman. But this is almost certainly mere casual coincidence.

We may observe with reference to the epicene divinity, that the double-headed Baphomet is circled by a serpent, that the caducus of Mercury is wound about with two serpents, and that it was by separating two coupling serpents that Tiresias, as told by Ovid, became a woman, and then a man again, and finally a seer or *magus* like Genzio. And so the fragments of old myths and mysteries, which were confused and degraded by the multitude even in the earliest times, still survive in still more rusted forms deteriorate, or frayed and faded to the very rag-bag of tradition—whence such as I take them to be made over again, be it into paper or shoddy, which men call devil's dust; of which latter sort much of this witch-lore, I fear me, does in very truth consist.

The incantation to Genzio, by means of which a witch may become male or female, is indeed curious, though not interesting to the general reader. It must be remembered that these witch and wizard documents are, to begin with, by no means intended to be published at all, and that (as was the case with all the sacerdotal sorcery of yore) the text is merely a note or memorandum to which much verbal instruction was attached. Which was specially the case with this, which I translate literally:

To Become Man or Woman.

In the morning, at the earliest dawn,
I heard a voice, and it tormented me,
Greatly tormented me, I knew not why.

And so I rose one morning, and I went
Unto my mother, and she said to me:
"I know, my dear—it is thy heart which speaks:
It is thy heart which speaks to thee of Love!"

Then in an instant I made up my mind
To go unto the Mount of *alla Croce*,
Hoping to find the spirit Genzio there.

And when at last unto the Mount I came,
And stood thereby, I knew not what to do,
Nor how to summon Genzio, when I saw
A Snail with shell, and thus to me it spoke:
"Beautiful girl! what is it thou seekest here?

"I am the Snail of deepest mystery,
Of augury and of prediction strange;
Genzio has sent me here to counsel thee."

"Beautiful Snail," I answered, "let me know
My destiny indeed, whate'er it be,"
And trembling I awaited its reply.

It paused, as if it drew from Genzio
A secret power, then thus to me replied:
"Thou art both pale and ill, and I behold
In thee the outward signs of wasting love:

"A fearful passion is gnawing at thy heart,
Thou hast in full the agony of love,
Thou'rt wasting from the sharp desire to love,

"And now I will predict thy destiny.
I bear this mystic cummin and the salt,
Which scattering as I do pass along,

"I weave meanwhile a garland of Christ's thorn[1]
All for thy head, which has such mighty power
That thou canst have no peace nor rest until
Thou hast with speed extreme traversed the space

"Between our worlds, and, coming from afar,
Appearest as a Snail before my eyes.
Or as an Earthworm—man or woman be it,
As I do summon thee. Thou art compelled
To come as one or other. If I bathe
My hands in blood, thou'lt come i' the form of man,
And if in milk, as woman thou'lt appear.

[1] *Marrucha.* Rham, or Christ's Thorn.

"Even as I, poor Snail, do humbly crawl,
Even so three nights and days thou too must creep
Along the Way of the Mountain of the Cross:

"And thou with thee meanwhile two cups must bear,
One filled with milk and one with oxen's blood,
And with them salt and cummin, and the while
Must scatter them upon the ground, and say:

"'Spirit of Genzio, to whom I call,
Much canst thou tell, much canst thou do for me,
And unto thee and in the form of Snail;[1]

"'And when I would myself become a man,
Thou'lt be compelled to give me of thy power,
That I may be an Earthworm,[2] and from that

"'Assume the manly power, and when again
I'd be a woman, I will be a Snail,
And thus assume the being feminine.'"

There is unquestionably in this mystical fragmentary incantation a great deal, not of conjectural or haphazard coincidence with tradition, but of veritable tradition itself. The spirit who is of two sexes is invoked specially with regard to the earthworm and snail, and both these creatures are hermaphroditic, the male principle, for obvious reasons, being supposed to predominate in the former, and the female in the latter.[3]

Of this spell it may be truly said, *multa latent quæ non patent*, and that it refers to what I have never seen described in print in any language.

I have still another story of Fiesole, twelve mortal pages in length, but as it treats of nothing more than

[1] This is somewhat obscure. I conjecture that it refers to walking in a spiral form, or describing a helix during the incantation.

[2] *Rombriga, rombrica.* Pure Italian, *lombrico.*

[3] "Es ist die Muschel (this includes the snail) weil sie das Erzeugniss der allgebärenden Feuchtigkeit ist, das Sinnbild der weiblichen Geschlechtstheile, und ist der Aphrodite geheiligt."—FRIEDRICH, *Symbolik der Natur.* Common erotic slang in German abounds in proof of this.

how three sisters were horribly bewitched, and then unbewitched by the help of the Virgin and priestly spells, slightly mixed with common witchcraft, I will not give it, since I invariably try, at least—however I may succeed—not to bore people with anything which would bore me.

"*Hæc fabula docet.* This fable teaches," subjoins Flaxius with the red pencil, "that as all cyder would be hock if it could, so all women would like to be men; and witches, who are a higher variety of the same article, or *hæc*, aspire to be both. As we may see it pleasingly illustrated in the fast damsels who put on male attire (saving the skirt) and indulge in all manner of New Womanly exercises, such as short hair, American cocktails, billiards, barring the spot for a hundred sovs., stock-gambling, pick-me-ups and lay-me-downs, and similar alcoholic or nervous soothers, with agitation and publicity of the most exhilarating and delightful kind; all of which I behold with calm delight—regretting to observe, however, that in all cases it ends very much the same as it would have done had these enchantresses travelled by the old road!"

And as *postscriptum* unto this, I add that the author has, since the above was written, collected, partly with the aid of Miss Lister, who foraged about Rome, much more very curious and strange snail-lore, which may creep slowly into print—as befits the subject—in a future edition, or another work!

A LEGEND OF THE SPEAKING STATUES OF THE VIA CERRETANI

"For it was filled with sculptures rarest,
Of forms most beautiful and strange. . . .
And as she looked, still lovelier grew
Those marble forms; the sculptor sure
Was a strong spirit, and the hue
Of his iron mind did there endure. . . .
And their lips moved, one seemed to speak . . .
The statues gave a joyous scream."

—SHELLEY, *Marianne's Dream.*

"Truly it is a far greater miracle to make statues speak than mute people. . . . And that statues have spoken is narrated by Valerius Maximus, how that of Fortune in Rome in the Via Latina spoke twice to the Roman matrons, saying, 'Rightly have ye seen me, and rightly have ye dedicated me!'"—*Compendio del l'Arte Essorcistica del* R. P. F. GIROLAMO MENGHI, A.D. 1582.

"Quando Dii varias mundi partes, urbes, ædes, *statuas* proprie sortiri dicuntur, intellige essentiam potentiam illorum ubique in se ingentem, hoc aut illud potissimum illustrare, atque sicut lumen in se manens."—JAMBLICHUS *de Mysteriis.*

I WOULD remark of the following tale that, while the story itself is given in minute detail just as I received it, the original was very baldly or imperfectly narrated, and that I have somewhat polished it as regards style. To the critic who would classify it I would say that 'tis about three-fourths sheep to one-fourth goat, my part thereof being the latter, or like the Indian whose forefathers consisted of three white men and one Chippeway.

"There was once in Florence a young artist of great genius named Florio. He made marvellous works in bronze and marble, which were sold for high prices, and yet he was miserably poor. Still he wasted no money, and, far from having

any vices, he lived like a modest saint. But, as the saying is, 'Whom God loveth, him He chasteneth,' also—

'Chi da Dio é amato
Da lui viene visitato,'

'God comes to him whom He loves,' and this tale will show how He came to chasten Florio.

"The secret of Florio's poverty was this, that while still an apprentice to a famous artist named Fabiano, the master, who was very shrewd, observing that the youth was quite ignorant of his own talent, made an agreement with him that, for a certain sum to be paid monthly, Florio should bind himself to work for Fabiano, give him all he made, and keep by oath the secret that he had made the things which he had been set to do. And for a long time he rejoiced at having made such a bargain.

"But ere long it came to pass that for every hundred crowns which he paid Florio, Fabiano received a thousand—*e, di più, godeva il credito*—and also got all the credit for work which was far beyond his own power to perform.

"And Florio was too honest to break the contract which he had made as a boy with the crafty master who had rightly judged of what was in him.

"And this is a thing which may be found in Florence at the present day, that *Il contadino uccise il cignale, e il signore n'ebbe il credito*,—'The peasant killed the boar, and his lord got the credit of it.'

"'Uno al monte
E l'altro al pian;
Quel che è oggi
Non é diman.'

"'One mounts the hill in gladness,
Another seeks the plain;
Yet gaiety or sadness
And laughter sweet or sorrow
May pass away to-morrow
And ne'er return again.'

"Yet all hidden things will come some day to light, and all the foxes meet some day at the furrier's.

"Now there was a very learned and wise gentleman, and one experienced in magic, named Simone, and it befell one day that he and many more gentlemen with ladies met at the studio of Fabiano to examine a marvellous bronze statue

which the artist declared was the best which he had ever made, and those who had seen it declared it would be famous through all Italy from A to Z. Nor was Fabiano himself backwards in commending his own work. But the Signore Simone, who knew the truth, could not help pitying Florio, when he was standing aside neglected, while Fabiano accepted with thanks all the compliments; and at last, seeing the young man turn pale and red, and then, unobserved as he thought, wipe away a tear of grief, he resolved to aid him.

"'Yes,' remarked Fabiano, 'it is not for me to praise my own work, but it is a fact that the Grand Duke said to me yesterday that all that this statue wanted to be perfect was the gift of speech. But ah! art is difficult, and the trouble which I had to make this work is beyond belief. If it could indeed speak, it would tell you *cose miraculose meravigliose*—marvel-wondrous things.'

"'*Per Bacco!*' cried Simone, 'thou sayest that in a good place and time. *Bel parlare che è alla larga!* For I have learned in an old magic book an incantation which, when duly sung, will bring true speech to any statue's tongue, or to its lips if a tongue be wanting.'

"'Let us see the miracle, by all means,' exclaimed the Grand Duke.

"'Certainly,' cried all the ladies.

"'Carried by acclamation,' said all present. 'Let us hear the statue speak.'

"Then Simone, approaching the statue, said very solemnly (in Florentine):

"'Ti prego, o statua,
Di dimmi la verità,
Dove tu siei nata,
E tutto il patto,
Come siei fatta!'

"'O statue, tell me now, in sooth,
And let me have the very truth,
When wert thou born, and what may be
The contract which was signed for thee?'

"Then the statue answered:

"'Da Florio io son fatto,
Da Florio disegnato;
Florio ha l' amaro,
Fabian' il dolce e' l'danaro.'

"'I was made by Florian,
His the labour and the plan;
He had the bitter and the hard,
While Fabian got the sweet reward.'

"Then all the statues in the room raised their voices in chorus and sang:

"'Siamo tutti di Florio,
A lui tutta la gloria!'

"'Twas Florio made us, every one,
To him the glory be alone!'

"Then the Grand Duke, being indignant at such injustice, ordered an investigation by the Council. And when the whole truth came to light, it was decreed that the compact between Fabiano and Florio should be broken, and that the younger artist should be allowed to take for his own all the works in his master's studio. And thus Florio became prosperous and famous, while Fabiano sunk into merited contempt.

"From which we may learn that 'He who pastures his sheep in another man's field, will some day lose all the flock,' and that

"'He who sleeps in the devil's bed,
By the devil will be awakenèd.'"

"Truly 'tis no unusual thing in life," adds our Flaxius, "to see some pitiful, thieving, lying, rascally snob of a Philistine steal the invention of another—be it a poem, a system of Political Economy, or one of Industrial Art Education, or a project in reforms, or a thousand other things, in which the thief could no more have made a beginning by himself, than he could have planned Creation. But in the end the statues always speak and proclaim the infamy of the plagiarist. Yea, for a brief season he may frisk around among his admiring friends in a small sphere, and be exalted as the original; but he is only like a mouse with an invisible twine round his neck, one end of which is held by Nemesis, till she tires of the game, and gives a jerk. The statues have spoken, and the statutes of the eternal law of retribution are fulfilled!"

THE SCULPTOR AND THE GODDESS VENUS: THE ORIGIN OF THE VENUS DI MEDICIS

A LEGEND OF LA VIA LAMBERTESCA

"J'ai chez moi une statue en marbre, à qui je voudrais donner la vie. On m'a dit, Maître, que aviez ce don, et j'ai recours à votre science."—*Le Magicien, par* ALPHONSE ESQUIROS, 1838.

> "There too the Goddess loves in stone, and fills
> The air around with beauty; we inhale
> The ambrosial aspect, which, beheld, instils
> Part of its immortality—the veil
> Of heaven is half undrawn; within the pale
> We stand, and in that form and face behold
> What mind can make when Nature's self would fail;
> And to the fond idolaters of old
> Envy the innate flash which such a soul could mould."
> —*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, xlix.

"LONG, long ago, when the spirits and *folletti* of the old Roman time yet lived in the land, there was in Florence a young sculptor, who dwelt in the tower in La Via Lambertesca by Por San Maria, and he was gifted with great talent and marvellous beauty, so that people said he had been blessed by the fairies.

> "'For those whom fairies never bless
> Are seldom famed for loveliness,
> And ever fall in dire distress.'

"Now it came to pass that one day this young man, seeking for subjects of study in an old Roman temple at some distance from the city, found an exquisitely beautiful statue of a woman hidden away, which he admired as he had never had aught before. And that night he could not sleep for thinking of it; it haunted him like a living thing, and the passion grew on him so, that he went out, and, stealing into the temple, stole away the statue. Truly it was very heavy, but the young man was as strong as an ox, and inspired with such a mad

desire to possess it, that he went a long way bearing it. At last, however, he was obliged in distress, and almost in despair, to set it down, fearing that he must abandon it, when, to his amazement, the statue spoke and said: 'Do not be discouraged; lift me again, and make a mighty effort. Fortune favours the bold and strengthens the strong!'

"Then he applied himself with all his might to bear the beautiful burden, and found indeed either that his strength had increased, or that the image had grown lighter, for when he reached his home he carried it with great ease. And truly it was no great wonder that it weighed less, for it had now become a living woman, the most beautiful creature on earth, whom the sculptor both loved and worshipped, and who, remaining with him, made him perfectly happy. And she, inspiring him, so aided him in his work that he became the greatest sculptor living.

"But one night there appeared to him in a dream a lady of magnificent, yea, of superhuman beauty, and she, looking sternly at him, said:

> "'I am the greatest of the goddesses,
> For I am Venus, queen of earth and heaven,—
> Venus, who rules all hearts; yet thou hast dared
> To steal the fairest statue from my shrine,
> And thou shalt ever be the most accursed
> And most tormented of all men on earth,
> Wailing in life with all the pains of hell,
> Unless thou dost return it unto me,
> Unless thou bring'st that statue to its home.'

"Then the goddess vanished, and the youth awaking in great terror, told his dream to his wife, and she replied:

"'Truly, I anticipated this; but there is a way out of every wood, however dark, when one loves. Now go to sleep as soon as possible, and when the goddess reappears to thee, promise that thou wilt reproduce her in marble as beautiful as life, that with love and worship thou wilt make it, praying her to inspire the work.'

"So he slept, and, as his wife had said, the goddess came again, and he thus addressed her:

> "'Fairest, sweetest of all deities!
> Venus, queen of all the beautiful,
> Thou who ever lovest to forgive,
> Thou whose pleasure is to give reward!
> Let me keep the statue which I stole;

Since my love has given to it life,
And thou art the spirit of that love,
Let me make another in its place,
Let me place thy image in thy shrine,
And if it be not as beautiful,
Then will I return my wife to thee.'

"Then the goddess, hearing this, smiled and vanished, and it seemed to the youth that all the air and sky seemed to glow and shine as with a rosy light—*tutta rilucente e coperta di rose.*

"And when he awoke, all the room was perfumed with roses like a garden—*profumata di rose pareva un giardino.*

"Then he went to work with all his heart, guided by his memory of the goddess, being truly inspired with devotion; and so he made the most marvellous statue in the world, which was placed in the temple, *con gran cirimogna* — with great ceremony.

"From that time he became the greatest sculptor of his age, and the statue which he made may yet be seen in the Ufizzi of Florence, and it is called the Venus dei Medici."

This tale is translated, with very trifling addition or variation, from the original, not more than six lines in all, which pleases me, since I consider it one of the most beautiful which I have met with. But whether it is an antique is beyond knowledge, and I therefore class it as modern. Likewise, the connection or relationship of the same tale to the Venus di Medici is extremely suspicious, for I ween that my informant's knowledge of statuary is not only limited but confused, and that the legend would have followed had I begun by asking for any other image of a goddess. However, all stories or traditions, to be respectable, should have their origin involved in mystery!

"*Parbleu!*" adds our Flaxius to this, "which meaneth by the blue expanse of heaven, or all the blue stockings which contain, like purses, pretty legs—it mattereth, meseems, not one red farthing whether the tale be as old as the father of the fathers of antiquity or not, since the main motive therein existed when the prototypal angel of heaven wooed the first angeless. And it is this, that many and many a girl is respec-

tively a statue, or a wooden figure-head or Dutch doll, or a wax baby, marionette, or jumping Jenny (I care not how clever or lively), until the *love* of a more vigorous mind or stronger intellect inspires her, when she forthwith becomes, if not perfect, at least raised

"'To her appointed measure of perfection.'

"Then she, seeming the ideal of the charming unto her wooer, is made by him the model for his statue of Venus or the heroine of his novel, written or dreamed; and so it comes that Art abounds in so many more marvellous maids than there are in Life.

"'And as 'twill ever be in days to come.'"

THE SPELL OF BOCCACCIO, OR HOW THE GREAT WRITERS OF FLORENCE BECAME GENIUSES

"This I hold,
That Genius is true magic—never yet
Did man speak well who was not well inspired
By some strange sorcery far beyond himself."

IT may be observed that in all countries where magic or witchcraft has become deeply ingrained in the multitude, or is, so to speak, a real religion, there is always a conviction that all intellectual talents or gifts come from it, and are caused or developed by spells, conjurations, and observances. This is not a matter of tradition; it may be sporadic and spontaneous. I have found it, from personal experience and observation, most advanced among the Red Indians of America, who, when the tricks of conjurers are explained to them, regard them as miracles just the same, because it required miraculous genius to *invent* them. I once knew an old Passamaquoddy Indian named Gabriel. One day when I was present, and Gabriel was by my side in a hotel office, the clerk asked a question by telephone of another man a mile distant, and received an answer.

"How he do that?" asked Gabriel, who had never seen nor heard of a telephone.

I told him it was by a curious invention, to which he shrewdly replied, "Oh, me see—*medaolin*—it is magic." And all the explanation in the world, and showing him the contrivance and working of a telephone, would never have removed his belief that conjuring was at the bottom

of it. Indeed, I am not sure that there was not for Gabriel something unearthly in a wheelbarrow, and that the devil did not impel locomotives and steamboats. I speak here seriously, for Gabriel held in good faith that I myself was deep in occult arts, as I always conversed with him as with a fellow-heathen, and could read his simple heart as perhaps no other white man could do.

Therefore, I was not astonished to learn from witch authority that a great writer—Messer Gian Boccaccio—was one who had acquired his talents by ways that were dark and occult sorceries. And after some research among the learned in secret lore, there was unearthed for me the very spell which, it was believed, had been used by all the divine writers of Italy. It is called the *Scongiurazione per la Penna e l'Inchiostro,* or "Incantation of the Pen and Ink," and is as follows:

SCONGIURAZIONE POTENTE.

A questo tavolino io mi siedo,
Calmaio, penna carta io lo prendo,
E lo spirito della Bellaria lo scongiuro;
Che il cielo fa rasserenare;
Che tutto cio che scrivo sia per me,
Sia di buona fortuna!
Spirito della Bellaria che tanto bella siei!
Fammi la grazia da desto,
O vienimi in sogno a farmi sapere
Che tutto cio che scriverò,
Mi sara sempre di buona fortuna!

INCANTATION.

Here at this table I now seat myself,
Having my inkstand, pen, and paper spread,
To invoke the spirit of Bellaria!
The one who makes the heaven serene and fair,
That all which I may write may ever be
A source of happy fortune unto me!

Spirit of Bellaria, so beautiful,
I pray thee come before me while awake,
Or else in sleep, and tell me in my dreams
That what I write will be most fortunate!

Simple and almost rude as this invocation seems, there is in it, when understood and explained, an exquisite and refined beauty of association and tradition.

Bellaria is a spirit of whom I found traces several times, long ago, in popular Tuscan traditions. There seem indeed to be several spirits of the name, but they all correspond closely to the Etrusco-Roman group of Eos and the Nymphs of the Dawn. She is the same with *Alpena*, a spirit of air, light, and flowers. Alpena is very evidently the old Roman-Etruscan *Alpan*, of whom Corssen says: "She creates the ornamental part of the world of plants, and brings it sweeping through the air in the train of Adonis; she is the Goddess of Spring." I could add to this much more, not only from writers on Etruscan subjects, but from traditions and tales gathered by me, but this is enough to show that Bellaria, "who makes the heaven serene and fair," is a most appropriate Muse for one who would write on beautiful subjects serenely and cheerfully.

But there is a deeper association or tradition in this than might at first occur to the reader. Everywhere in popular Italian legends do we meet with a feeling or familiar knowledge of the fact that the word *Aria*, or air, is a synonym for a tune or song, and that the *melody* is the sustaining soul of poetry. In the tale of Orpheus, as given in another chapter,[1] Eurydice is called *Auradice*, and is to the poet evidently "the lost chord," the missing music which inspired his strain. I believe, indeed, that in these Tuscan traditions we have the only real explanation of the myth.

Bellaria, as spirit of the air, is certainly an equivalent

[1] First series.

of Eurydice. I have pointed out elsewhere that Bulwer makes an ancient Roman invoke the spirit of the air by the lost Eurydice. She is the female form, or music of the male poem.

"*Che farò senza Eurydice?*" exclaims the Orpheus of Gluck, meaning, "What can I do without music?"—that is, metre and form. I daresay that Gluck had this idea when he composed what is perhaps his best song. These myths had deep meanings, and I beg the reader not to reject mine as merely speculative, but do me the grace to consider well all that I allege.

The myth of Orpheus has never been understood, but this incantation, if ancient, casts much light upon it. And how it could be modern is beyond my knowledge, since most assuredly the woman from whom I got it neither made it nor did she know anything of mythology. The Italians call a melody an *air* because air is the medium of the flute, which inspired classic song. Orpheus is a poet who, wanting or losing music or *motive*, goes *ad inferos* to recover it. Does the pomegranate seed eaten by Eurydice mean a check or stop in singing or in a melody? The pomegranate renders the voice rough, and the seed has the same effect as nuts, which make the voice harsh, as any one may find. When we think of the great importance attached to *clear* singing in ancient times, this seems at least to explain a great deal.

The Greeks and Romans so perfected their prose into poetry, as do the Arabs, that they probably intoned or half sang their speeches, and even had a musical accompaniment to them. The Koran is in this manner a poem, and an Italian peasant of a certain kind of culture is always as ready to sing a story as to tell it.

The foregoing incantation is, however, only for a man. I obtained also another for a woman which is different. I am indebted for it to Miss Roma Lister, for whom it was written or recorded.

SCONGIURAZIONE

Per una scritrice ovver una donna che vorebbe scrivere.

Sono donna che a tavolino siede
Con penna, carta e con calamaio,
Tu Bellaria che tante lettere
E racconti scrivesti quanto eri
Innamorata, dunque Bellaria,
Quando a questo tavolino siedo
A scrivere una lettera d'amore,
O un racconto ciò che voglio scrivere
Per quanto bella sei, o ispirami
Una bella lettera, un bel racconto
E vieni anche la notte in sogno
A farmi sapere ciò che posso scrivere
Il giorno spirito della Bellaria
A te mi raccomando che belle cose
Tu mi possa sempre inspirare.

INCANTATION

To be pronounced by a lady who desires to become a writer.

I am a woman sitting at a table,
With pen and paper and my inkstand ready;
Do thou, O beautiful Bellaria,
Who, when thou wert in love, so much didst write,
I do conjure thee, for thy beauty's sake,
That when I too a love-letter would write,
Or poetry or tale, inspire in me
To write such poems and to tell such tales,
As may be worthy of thy worshipper;
And come to me, I pray, by night in dreams,
And let me know what 'tis I best can write
By day, sweet spirit of Bellaria!
Accept my homage and inspire my pen!

It is very likely that this latter is only a modification of the first incantation. I have always declared frankly that every suspicion may be entertained, and every allowance made, for the possibility of variation or deceit or error in these incantations. But that there is in all of them a

nucleus, or centre, or *basis* of old tradition, making all allowance for changes, is evident.

It was not till some time after all the above was written that it occurred to me, to my astonishment, that Bellaria is the equivalent for, or precisely the same deity as, the Etruscan *Alpan*, who, like the Lases, her sisters, is represented as holding a *stylus* or pen. There can be no question as to this, the inference being, either that we have here a most extraordinary instance of tradition well preserved, or a marvellous chance coincidence. That is to say, distinctly, in the old Etruscan pictures Bellaria or Alpan is represented as holding a pen, and that in the Italian incantation to bless the pen Bellaria is invoked.

There is another spell addressed to another spirit, which is even more curious than this. It belongs entirely to the secrets of witchcraft. When a man or woman wishes to acquire special skill in composing incantations or invocations to spirits, or to make spells in poetry, he or she must have recourse to a spirit named *Zandolo*. As the *scongiurazione* and details of the ceremonies used fill ten pages, I may be excused for not giving them here. Suffice it to say that "a fair garland of laurel and oak" must be offered, and that from the incantation it appears that Zandolo, like the Norse Vala, is buried in sleep, from which he is wakened, not by "Runic rhyme," but by Tuscan blank verse.

> "Grant me this, O great poet,
> And I will disturb thee no more;
> I, who have called thee from afar,
> I will not again break
> The sleep of the eternals,
> I will leave thee to repose!"

The whole ends with the following verses:

> "Thou who dost take delight in woodland walks,
> In traversing the shady forest fair,
> The verdant fields and varied villages,
> Still making pleasant poems as you pass.

Thou who inspirest in me such desire,
Thou who awakenest in me such delight,
To form new spells and incantations rare,
Though in the spirit of the olden time,
Songs of the fairy and the sorceress.[1]

When I would make a verse which will not come
Into my head, and I am in despair
Because success doth seem impossible,
Then to Zandolò I address my prayer,
The mighty lord of magic poetry!"

I have not been able to discover among the classic Græco-Roman or Etruscan deities any name allied to that of Zandolo, though I am satisfied that it is ancient. Perhaps some of my readers may be more fortunate.

Now, apropos of sundry of my omissions of original incantations, *et cetera*, and of the suggestion that my witches or I have made the *most* of our material—*parbleu!*—I would have ye all to know that I have written down in terrible Florentine Italian, of legends and incantations every whit as good as these, and which will probably never be published, far more than is contained in these two volumes.

[1] "Tutti i giorni a formar de' versi,
Di strege, di stregoni e di fate."

THE SIBYLS OF FLORENCE

" Dies iræ, dies illa
Solvet sæculum in favilla
Teste David cum Sybilla."—*Dies Iræ.*

"Sibylla Cumana fuit tempore Tarquinii Prisci."—KORNEMANNUS, 1614.

"Sic videmus hominem aliquem subitò in philosophiam, vel me dicum, vel oratorem egregium evadere, ex futuris autem prædicere quæ ad regnorum mutationes et sæculorum restitutiones pertinent, quemadmodum Sibylla Romanis."—HEN. CORNELIUS AGRIPPA *de Occult. Philosophia*, Liber primus, cap. lx.

LIKE the finding in the mud of Nineveh cylinders of precious stone bearing the epigraphs of mighty monarchs in the dawn of time, or Magna Charta about to be cut up for a tailor's measure, or discovering a lady who was erewhile a petted princess teaching the piano in Pimlico, or imperial Cæsar dead and turned to bricks, or the sword borne by a great general in a noble war, ground down into a cheese-knife (which I myself have seen), or folk-lore reduced to mere logarithmic tables of variants, is the frequent finding of old gods and great names in traditions of the people, brought down to the condition of dispensing small sorceries and sixpenny incantations—yea, the Sibyls themselves, the tremendous witnesses of the Awful Day, as the marvellous pavement of Siena bears testimony, the beings so stupendously revered that in early times they were regarded by both heathen and Christian as supremely inspired, dwelling in a poor hut in Florence and gaining a living by conjuring with the skull of an old Etruscan god and making cards mysteriously jump.

This is what I indeed found, and, what is worth noting, it was all a voluntary offering. For one day meeting

Maddalena, she told me that she had heard from a friend, and would soon write out for me, a very curious story of what I understood her to say were the *Sibbene*. But when it finally came, after some delay, it being a recondite piece of lore not easily obtained, as given me in manuscript on February 15, 1893, it proved to be the following. The translation is literal.

Le Due Sibille.

"These two Sibyls lived in the ancient time in a hut (*tugurio*) in the Via del Ramerino;[1] they practised the art of foretelling good or evil. They enjoyed a great reputation among the Florentines, although they inspired great terror.

"They were known indeed to all as brave witches and enchanters, knowing both sides of fate. They went among the peasants, and by virtue of certain plants they knew whether evil witches had cast disaster on children or caused sickness, and these things they could prevent or cure.

"And this was their manner of divination. When they would predict the coming of people, or any one wished to know of good or evil to come, they made a flame burn on a small brazier. By means of many small cords, they could cover the whole room and ceiling with a black veil, so that the room seemed to be converted into a bier. And they had two skulls, and by withdrawing a black covering there was revealed an entire human skeleton. And the bluish flames (*fiamme azzurognole*), as they rose and fell on all these things, cast an unearthly light—*ne derivava un' effetto dei più sinistri.*

"The witches took several packs of cards, cards called *tarocco*, on which were figures of goblins, dragons, and other monsters, and therewith formed a circle around the person who would fain know what fortune awaited him.

> "'Turning, they looked at the place
> Whence the flame came,
> Rising and falling in light or dark blue flashes;
> Each holding in her hand
> A small wand of shining black wood,
> On each of which a very little skull
> Served as the handle end.'

[1] Near Santa Croce, a favourite haunt of witches and fortune-tellers. I know one, as I write, who dwells in the Via Santa Croce, close by the church.

"Then they threw certain powders on the flame, and when this was done they sang:

"'Quanti diavoli sono sotto la terra,
Dove io cammino tutti li vengo
A scongiurare in nome di Setlano (*Setiano*),
Che del suo teschio per poma
Alla mia bachetta me ne servo,
Che tutti i diavoli dal' l'inferno
Si possono scatenare, e il romore
Di tutte le sue catene si faccia sentire,
E imprecazioni li sento mandare,
Che da si lontano gli ho fatto scomodare,
Tutte queste mie carte le faccio ballare,
E quei due teschi li faccio saltare,
In nome dello spirito Setlano!
Questa grazia mi vorrete fare!
Se questa grazia mi farete
Con quel velo nero lo sceletro
Dello spirito bigio lo coprirete,
Che lá in quel canto scoperto sta,
Se questa grazia non mi fate
Il velo fate lo cascare,
Da una parte, se questa grazia
Che vi chiedo riescirá cattiva,
Per risposta fate cascare.
Il velo sopra alla persone
Che qui aspetta.'

Translation.

"'As many fiends as hide beneath the earth,
So many do I conjure in the name
Of great *Setlano*, he whose skull I bear
Upon the handle of my magic wand,
Who all the devils can let loose from hell,
And make the rattling of their chains be heard,
And send forth dreadful curses on the world,
And cause strange suffering to those afar:
And now I make the cards dance by themselves,
And now ye see the skulls do dance with them,
Moved by the mighty name of great Setlano,
Whom I invoke, and if he grant my wish,
May the grey skeleton in yonder nook
Be covered with the veil: if he refuse,
Then may the covering from it fall away;
And if the favour you request of him
Be not conceded, then for a reply
May the black veil fall on the one who asks!'

"Having said this, they took the powder which was in the brazier with the ashes, and cast it into a running stream, and

threw after it over the shoulder a handful of coarse salt, and said:

"'Che tutto vada alla mal ora!'

"'May all of this go to evil!'"

This is indeed very simple miracle-making—that is, a darkened room, a little spirits with salt in it casting uncanny blue light on all around, a black curtain, the working of which with cords is naïvely explained, two light skulls of pasteboard, and a pack of cards, dancing obediently to horse-hairs or black silk threads. Yet it was with such cheap machinery that, even among the shrewd Greeks and clever Romans, the priests worked miracles, and so it all came down through the Dark and Middle Ages unto this our time, in which innocent servant-girls, and sometimes their mistresses, are still deluded by such deceptive diddling and *escamoterie.* But it is worth observing that the concluding casting the ashes and salt into a running stream, with a parting malediction, over the left shoulder, and walking away without once looking back, is of hoar Etrusco-Latin antiquity, and described by Virgil.

Still more curious is the name *Setlano*, which was also given to me as *Setiano*, and which a learned friend suggested was only that of Satan or Satano, which I very much doubted, because my informant, had such been the case, would most assuredly have written it *Satano*, *Satán*, or *Satanasso.* But, on consulting her, she positively declared that it was not *Satan* at all, but the name of a spirit, and that in the Romagnola dialect, from which she took it, the name was *Setlano.*

Sethlans was the ancient Etruscan Vulcan. The name is still known in the Romagna Toscana also as *Setrano*, as a spirit of fire. It may be, therefore, that in the earliest age it may possibly have had something in common with the Semitic Satan.

Since writing the foregoing remarks, it suddenly occurs

to me that the Saxon King Harold—an I err not—was terribly frightened at Glastonbury Abbey by the sacred cloak or mantle of a great saint, which, when he approached it, drew or flew back from him. Which thing was considered to be of such evil omen that when it spread abroad it did much to injure his cause. Oh, ye Roman priests who then had the upper hand, and who had the Pope and all the wisdom of the whole Church at your back, did ye know anything of the sacred properties of horse-hairs? Truthful and authenticated investigations after the Reformation disclosed in Germany that ye had images of the Virgin which had two faces—like Janus—one serene, and one sad or angry. Now these images were neatly set in a tablet so as to resemble bas-reliefs, and they turned on a pivot. And when the collection taken up was scanty, the priest standing before the image, unseen by the congregation, turned the Virgin round, and lo! when he went from it, there our Lady appeared in tears at the stinginess of the people. Then another collection was made, and if it was generous, round went the Madonna, and reappeared smiling. And at other times they had the Virgin made with hollow eye-sockets, into which they put grapes, which looked like eyeballs, and when the juice ran out the foolish people thought she wept. Truly the horse-hair was not far off from all this. *Sancte Hanke Pancke, ora pro nobis!*

These tricks are all minutely set forth by Prætorius, and also by the Abbé Constant in his novel *Le Sorcier de Meudon*, of which Rabelais is the hero. I obtained the full account of the Sibyls from Maddalena, and subsequently found another old witch and fortune-teller, known as Trina, living in Florence, who knew all the story, but did not remember the incantation, which she, however, declared that she could obtain for me. Trina was "a white witch," who said that she avoided the

invocation of spirits, because they were, as the Scotch say, "kittle cattle to deal wi'," or dangerous, although she fully believed in them. She confined her sorcery chiefly to fortune-telling with cards and selling amulets. She is still living here in Florence. I should say that Miss Roma Lister interrogated Trina more closely and fully than I did on the subject of the Sibyls, and that the result was a full confirmation of the written tradition from Maddalena—truth being that to which we all did aim—as honestly as Wednesday doth come twixt Tuesday and the following of Thor; or, as Cartwright is quoted by my old master and friend, Washington Irving:

"By Woden, God of Saxons,
From whence comes Wensday, that is Wodensday,
Truth is a thing that I will ever keep
Unto thylke day in which I creep into
My sepulchre!"

THE STORY OF SAN ANTONINO AND THE BARBER

THE FLYING CHILDREN AND THE DEVIL'S DICTIONARY—THE BARBER AND THE BUMBLE-BEE — A LEGEND OF THE BARBER'S SHOP IN THE PIAZZA TRINITÀ, JUST OPPOSITE THE COLUMN OF COSIMO—WITH A CURIOUS DISQUISITION ON THE SUBJECT OF BEES AND BARBERS.

"Come un barbiere, di qualità."—*Le Mariage de Figaro.*

"Pian barbier, che l'acqua scotta!"—*Italian Proverb.*

"Not the least influential of those who were in immediate attendance on the Sultan was the barber. . . . And from the Sultan's point of view there was reason to be particularly careful in the selection of a man whose duties involved drawing a razor daily over the imperial throat."—*Hassan the Barber*, by H. N. CELLIN.

A BOOK of Florentine tales of the olden time would be almost incomplete if there were not in it a story of a barber, so prominent a character was he in those days. For not only was there more shaving and hair-dressing then than now, but it was much more the fashion in that gregarious age for men to go to the barber's to have it done, and there talk over the news, while some one touched the lute—always kept for waiting customers—and others listened to the barber himself, as he held forth on politics or scandal, like a true Figaro. Ever since the fabled days of King Midas, the barber was the type of talkativeness: he could not hold his tongue.

It was probably for this reason that the blessed St. Antonino of Florence (1459), now buried in San Marco, selected a barber as the subject of a neat little miracle. It is recorded that one of his holy contemporaries once

said to a lady, "Be not proud that the Lord after His resurrection first appeared to a woman; He only did so that the news might be most rapidly made known;" and it may be conjectured that this was the cause why St. Antonino miracled the tonsor, or for the same reason why the latter warmed a salve—that it might spread the sooner.

As regards the exact spot, I am informed by an honest *folletto*, confirmed by the cast of Maddalena's cards and other corroborative testimony, that the barber's shop was in the Piazza Trinità, close by the Feroni, that being the centre of all the gossip in the town, just by the column where the fairies every evening discussed everybody. The great proof of which is that there has always been a barber's shop there since the earliest ages—in fact, I myself used to go there in 1846, which was I believe, during the Lombard occupation, or in the times of the Romans or Etruscans, or something of the sort—anyhow, it was before gas and railroads, which is all the same thing. Therefore, reader, if you will trust your valued head to a mild shave or a gentle clip, and listen meanwhile to an artist of the true Figaro school, go there, and as you sit, remember that it was *in that very building* that the following marvel occurred.

"San Antonino was full of charity for his neighbour. Now there was in his time a great famine in Florence, and he gave to the poor of his substance, so that he suffered for want of many needful things, but the Lord in return showed him how his offerings had been received. There was a barber named Maestro Pietro who shaved him, and one morning the barber told the saint that he had only three loaves, which would make a scant dinner for him and his, and how, withal, a poor man stood without crying for bread, with much more such information.

"'Give him a loaf,' said Antonino solemnly. The barber obeyed. There came yet another, and another 'poor,' and by the same command the two remaining loaves were transferred to the loafers. Master Pietro looked very ruefully indeed at

the last loaf, for he had not a *quattrino* or farthing wherewith to bless himself or to buy another.

"'And now, Pietro,' said the saint—he was only an archbishop then—very sweetly, 'spread the table and get ready, for I am going to lunch with you.'

"'Alas! your holiness,' cried Pietro, 'wherewith shall I spread it, since I have given away the last scrap of food in the house?'

"'Never mind,' replied the blessed Antonino, 'spread away all the same, my son; the Lord will provide.'

"Then the barber, resolved to at least go through the motions, but with little hope, took a plate and went to the great chest which had served as a pantry in his happier days, and lifted the lid. When lo! he found it full to the top with the whitest of bread, which, as the Life of the saint, printed in 1557, declares, was made by the Lord himself—*pane candissimo da Dio preparato.* No wonder that it adds:

"'*O felice barbiere, che si trovò a si fatto convitto!*'—Oh, happy barber, who found himself at such a banquet!

"Now it befell that this barber, having begun as aid in miracles, continued in the business. For, some time after, he complained to the Archbishop that during the night his children were lifted up in the air by some supernatural power, and carried from place to place. Then the Archbishop wrote a prayer on parchment, and asked the barber if he had no medical prescriptions; to which the latter replied that he had an old manuscript in which were many excellent recipes for many things, as in a dictionary.

"'Let me see it,' said the saint gravely. It was brought, and he turned it over.

"'*Imprimis*—"how to cure the tertian fever"—*optime*—"against the plague"—very good—"toothache"—Ha!' he suddenly exclaimed, 'what is *this* at the end?—"How to make the Thieves' Hand of Glory!"—"How to summon the spirits Belial and Ashtaroth"—"How to walk invisible by the aid of Diana and Herodias"—"How to find treasure by the aid of Satan." A nice book thou hast here, Master Pietro! No wonder that thy children are tossed about like balls by the devils!'

"'Oh, your holiness,' replied the frightened barber, 'I never took heed of the trash there at the end of the book, for I verily believed it was all nonsense.'

"'Nonsense indeed!' said the saint. 'Verily thou shalt see what kind of nonsense it is. Come with me!'

"And taking the unholy manuscript, they went to the Convent of San Marco, where, before many witnesses, the saint burned the book. Now ere he begun, it was very clear and beautiful weather, but as the work touched the fire, there came a tremendous crash of thunder, a blinding flash of lightning, and then a furious gale, and a midnight sky with torrents of rain in an unearthly tempest. And this lasted, to the awe of all, while the book was burning, but as the last fragment was consumed, the storm as suddenly passed away, and all was as serene and fair as ever, while a beautiful rainbow over-arched Florence like a celestial horse-shoe, promising prosperity. In which perchance the first suggestion lay that a horse-shoe must needs bring luck, like a rainbow, because it is shaped like it—both, moreover, resembling two horns, which, as is well known, are a marvellous type of peace, plenty, fertility, and happiness. *Apropos* of which, I myself picked up a horse-shoe a few days ago, but as it was very near the Castello del Diavolo of Siena, I hae my doot that the thing is unco' uncannie.

"It is pleasing to learn from the chronicle that the book being burned, all diabolical sorcery ceased, and the children were no longer transported from place to place."

Which tale I have indeed touched up a little—how much the reader may ascertain by referring to any of the several Lives of this saint.

Now, *apropos* of barbers and miracles, I have myself a small story to narrate, which, if not quite so wonderful, has at least the advantage of being literally true, all three of those who were present being still alive. It is as follows. But first I must premise that there is in my *Pidgin-English Sing-Song* (London, Kegan Paul & Co.) a poem by me which relates how a certain Chinese emperor was under his barber's hands to have his head shaved. Just at that instant a mosquito alighted on the imperial cranium, and the barber, with incredible skill and a sharp razor, cut off the insect's head at one sweep! For which he was ennobled, and given the privilege of bearing a staff, which all Chinese barbers carry to this day.

I was in the first barber's shop in the town of Homburg-on-the-Main in 1892, and my hair was being cut by an assistant, when this story occurred to me, and I was just beginning to narrate it in German to the tonsor, when all at once we were bothered by a bee who came buzzing round. The young man with his scissors made a clip at it, and that so adroitly that he decapitated the insect! He picked up the pieces and showed me how neatly it had been done. Then I told him the Chinese story, but it made very little impression on him, he was so taken with his own skill as an executioner. The master of the shop, who had more intelligence, was, however, very much struck by it.

It may be that in ages to come, should my life as a saint ever be written, that captious critics may trace this anecdote back to a song of earlier times, which states that—

> "The great Tartar king on a festival day
> Gave a spread to his court and resolved to be gay,
> When just in the midst of their music and glee,
> Their mirth was upset by a bumble-y bee."

Then the monarch in a rage offered a reward to him who should free the court from this pest; and there was present a general of great valour, an unrivalled swordsman.

> "The veteran rushed sword in hand on the foe,
> And cut him in two with a desperate blow;
> His Highness exclaimed, 'I'm delighted to see
> How neatly you settled that bumble-y bee!"

Nevertheless, I maintain that my story is true, even unto the minutest detail, and especially that I was just beginning to tell the tale of the Emperor when the bee was slain.

And yet again it happened thus of yore:

"Kunipert, king of the Lombards, was once in council at which he determined to slay a certain Ado and Grauso whom he mistrusted.

"And as they spoke, there came a fly which sat in the window. Then the king took a sharp knife and struck at the fly, but only cut away its forefoot.

"And soon after Ado and Grauso met a man limping who had lost a foot, and he told them how the king had held council to slay them, therefore they guarded themselves against him. Then the king was reconciled with them. But many hold that this fly was an evil spirit.[1]

Certainly it was, and if I had only lived in Lombard times, my Homburg bee would have been another diabolus. To be sure flies are not bees, any more than fleas are lobsters, but there are about eleven thousand pages of folk-lore on the subject, in which flies, fleas, bees, chafers, mosquitos, chinches, beetles, and many other kinds of humbugs are mixed up in inextricable confusion, like those which came out of the dragon when St. George decapitated it. [N.B.—I claim to have discovered in the Icelandic that *hum-bug* means a nocturnal terror.] Enemies of the traditional theory will gladly observe that my story of the bee is not borrowed, but occurred sporadically from concurrent causes, and that therefore, of course, it is not at all likely that my tales were ever translated by anybody.

I believe that the spirit of good San Antonino still haunts the barber's shop opposite the column of the fairies in the Trinità, because I have observed that when sitting there of a warm afternoon, under the hands of the artist, undergoing my clip or shampoo, I have always experienced a certain indescribably blessed and somnolent sensation, exactly like that of the holy repose so exquisitely described by Tauler, Madame Guyon, Bromley in the "Sabbath of Rest," Molinos, and a vast number of other Quietists, the truth of whose doctrine is fully proved by the fact that they all send the reader to sleep, so undeniable is it that every tree is known by its fruit and every saint by his works.

[1] Menzel, *Christliche Symbolik*, Book i. p. 295.

The works of San Antonino were not on a large scale. He was a saint for the people, and went about performing small family domestic marvels, such as fishing a bucket up out of the Arno for a little girl who had dropped it, and making bread appear in an empty box, a miracle known as *hanki-panki* in the saintly profession at present, and which is derived from two hieratic Gypsy-Hindi words implying substitution by legerdemain. I doubt not that he was not above showing devout people in a cheerful genial way how the holy coin or medal disappeared up his saintly sleeve, how the sacred pea vanished under the consecrated thimble, and in what manner the marvellous three cards illustrated the threefold mystery by shifting and changing into one another, so that even the shrewdest sharp amid the lookers-on could not tell which was the "spot." Did not St. Patrick do effectively the same when he exhibited the shamrock, which is the same as the three of clubs or "peter," to illustrate the same subject?

The truth is, that Mother Church was not, with all her dignity, above amusing the little children in her fold, and that what I have said about thimblerig and three-card monté, which sounds so wicked as coming from *me*, was carried out thousands of times, in very truth, in a thousand coarser, profaner, and in a more hankey-pan-theistic manner by the monks, than what *I* have here suggested. Ah well!—*what of it?* 'Tis all of the past, or passing fast away; "Upharsin" is writ on the wall.

A LEGEND OF THE VIA GELSUMINO, OR HOW THE CITY OF FLORENCE GOT ITS NAME

"Dove collocheremo le femmine in generale?
Risposta. Via delle Serve Smarrite a Via dei Pizzicotti.
Demanda. Per i fiorai, e giardinieri?
Risposta. Sul Prato, Via del Giardino, Via del Rosaio e Via del Gelsumino."—*Le Strade di Firenze addatate alle Arte e Mestieri di suoi Abitanti*, 1886.

THE following is of no value as a local legend, but as it contains the outline of a quaint story, which may possibly be traditional, and which is certainly droll, I give it, premising that it is of that kind of irregular prose-poetry which is common among Italians, and often seen in American newspapers, but which is little known in England.

La Strega della Via del Gelsumino.

"Oh, once there was a pretty girl, and very sad was she; she wanted a lover, and none could she discover. A vine without a tree, or a bottle wanting wine, or a maid who for love doth pine, are all sorry sights to see!

"She went unto her aunt—'My dear, what do you want?'—'Oh, if a witch you be, I pray by all above me, conjure up some man to love me—a life without a lover is a sorry sight to see!'

"'My dear, yon steps just clamber into the upper chamber, and see what you'll behold! Three cavaliers so fine, a-sitting o'er their wine, all in satin, furs, and gold. When we neither love nor drink, as I certainly do think, people soon seem growing old.

"'Pick out the one who pleases your peculiar caprices, and bear him to your bed; with a wish you shall be wed; such a

gallant *bel signor* is of everything the flower; you shall have him *par amour*.' What she asked soon gaily sped.

"In the hall she soon appears, all among the cavaliers, and a love among them seeks. 'Oh, you're all such darling dears! But this one takes my fancy, his eyes have such brilliáncy, and he looks so lithe and dancy, so romancy with piquancy, and he has such rosy cheeks!'

"Early in the morning rising, she beheld a sight surprising, for there upon the clothes, or blooming on the pillow, instead of her dear fellow, just—how very, very queer!—of all things far or near, was a lovely blushing rose!

"'Oh, my aunt, what shall I do? My husband he is gone; I've no other hope but you; I am in the world alone—all loveless and unknown. On such grief I had not reckoned.'—'Dearest niece, go wed the second; he may prove a better one. But keep the rose with care; don't you see 'tis not full blown!'

"She bounded like a filly to the chamber up above; there she found a perfect dove, as fair as any lily. The maiden willnilly, and with rapture almost silly, cried, 'I'll have you for my love!'

"How soon the night was over, with the snow-white perfumed lover, whom in her arms she bound; yet in the morning waking, truly there was no mistaking; sad to her as any willow, there upon the broad white pillow she a lovely lily found.

"But there still remained a third. '*Bel Signor*, upon my word, now I come to consider, you're the best of all to tidder, and I take you for my lord; the best comes last I see. You're a jessamine for beauty, I am sure that I will suit ye—be my Jemmy Jessamy!'

"She had had abundant warning, but all experience scorning, she would still a husband win; but what was her amazement when the light came through the casement, upon the following morning she beheld a jessamine!

"'Oh, aunt, I'm broken-hearted, my loves are all departed—and, between me and you, what can I really do? I am ruined and beguiled!' The enchantress gaily smiled. 'The story is not finished, my power is undiminished; we will now try something new.'

"'And the flowers? Behold the three.'—'Well, give them all to me; all is right, upon my word.' She bound them carefully with a woollen scarlet cord, then pronounced an incantation, to her niece's admiration. As she saw the conjuration,

they were sprinkled with a shower of some mystical perfume, when all the three in bloom united in one flower.

"To grow it then began into a gentleman, the finest ever seen; his cheeks were like a rose, and, as you may suppose, his hands were lily-white, to the lady's great delight, and his breath like jessamine, while his garments all were green. 'Twas a most enchanting sight!

"And as the story warrants, they had a child named *Florence*, a fairy fair and witty, who founded this great city—who chose the lily flower, and put it in the field in the middle of her shield, where you see it plain revealed to this hour."

This was indeed only a ragged scrap of a prose fairy tale as I acquired it, but as it took my fancy I enlarged it to its present form. All there was in the original amounted to this, that there was a girl who had three lovers, who all in succession turned into three flowers which the witch-aunt combined into a lily—the *giglio* of Florence. It was evidently suggested by the three divisions of the lily, which resemble three separate flowers bound together.

THE FAUN OF THE FOUNTAIN

" In every statue lies confined
A spirit or a sentient mind,
Since into all which human seems
Some elf will slip as into dreams,
Who may be made, at fitting hour,
To speak when called by magic power.
Therefore the Hebrew prophet taught
Such forms by man should ne'er be wrought,
Lest they by mystic sorcery
To magic ends should conjured be.
Thus 'twas forbid in dim ages
Of yore, to worship images,
But when they chatter, flirt, and sing—
As girls—'tis quite a different thing."—C. G. L.

I HAD conjectured that there must be a tradition connected with the Faun of the Fountain by the Ponte Vecchio, because its very appearance is such as to suggest a legend, but it was six years before I obtained the following:

"As we cross the Ponte Vecchio and enter the Via Guicciardini, there is at the right hand a small piazza or open place, in which, against the wall, is a graceful fountain with a beautiful bronze figure. And this is the enchanted statue of a Faun (*Fauno*) who was of a kind of *folletti* or fairies who waited on Bacchus, the god of wine. They were often mischievous and frolicsome, much given to teasing men and kissing maidens, but not wicked; they lived for the most part in the woods, but often came to the vineyards by night to steal grapes or girls, and for this they were sometimes punished by their master.

"This image is over the running water, and he holds a cup in one hand and a bunch of grapes—*grappolo*—in the other. But it was in a different position in ancient times, nor did the Faun then have the goblet or the grapes.

"He was a *folletto* or spirit, who for some offence had been

confined in the statue or turned into one. For of these ancient images some were made by men, and spirits entered into them or were put there to live, while others were spirits, or sometimes human beings, turned into stone or iron. And some could go in or out, like dogs from their kennels, while others were shut in, and only permitted to wander now and then, as at the full moon or on the Eve of St. John.

"But this Faun was a *folleto confinato in statua*, or spirit strictly imprisoned in an image; and what made his punishment worse, he suffered from continual thirst, and could not quench it, while he beheld the cool water all the while running at his feet. And his arms were then raised on high, as was his head, like those of a man suffering and imploring (*alzate in attitudine molto soffrente e disperato*).

"One night there passed by the statue a jolly contadino with a waggon-load of grapes and a barrel of good old wine. It was a full moon, the streets were deserted—all was still—and it happened to be the time when the Faun could speak, as could all the spirits, and when everybody believed in them.[1]

"The contadino was a little tipsy from too frequently tapping his barrel as he went along, and he was in the most benevolent and generous mood, feeling as if he would like to treat 'all the world and his wife,' when he paused before the image.

"Now truly, if the Faun was all the time in suffering from want of mere water running away at his feet, you may imagine what his agony of longing was when he saw the contadino with his load of grapes stop just before him, and draw off into a cup and drink a draught of good old wine. And his sufferings were so intolerable that with this the measure of his punishment was fulfilled, when he uttered from his very heart the following prayer:

To Bacchus.

"'Spirit of Bacchus, I do conjure thee,
Thou who a spirit art, my brother too!
Grant me the power well to honour thee;
Grant that I once again may drink to thee,
And that the draught may fitly be in wine.

[1] *E che tutti erano credenti negli spiriti.* This is word for word from the original MS., and it is difficult to understand why this bit of information is here inserted. It would seem as if the improbability of statues speaking had suddenly struck the narrator, and she hastened to explain that this was what was believed in the old time.

Spirit of Bacchus, I do pray to thee!
Grant that this contadino may bestow
On me a bunch of grapes; give me the power
To draw from them once more the wine of life,
As we were wont to do in days of old.'

"The contadino had paused before the fountain to vary his wine with a draught of cool water, when, looking at the Faun with uplifted arms and an expression as of one imploring and suffering on his face, he exclaimed:

"'Poor soul! what dost thou want, or what wouldst thou have?'

"The Faun replied: 'I suffer with thirst and hunger.'

"'Take this bunch of grapes,' answered the peasant, 'also my cup, with which thou mayest drink thy fill!'

"Then the Faun took the cup and squeezed the grapes so that their juice filled the cup, and it became wine of the best, and he drank of it and laughed, and said:

"'Now I'm at peace, at last I am free;
Drink of the wine, and drink to me.
Now I can fly wherever I will,
Over meadow and valley, and river and hill,
And hide in the grottoes shady and old,
And bathe in the woods in the rivulet cold;
For I've tasted the sacred wine and am free,
Thanks to Bacchus and thanks to thee;
Taste it thyself, and it shall be so
That care and sorrow thou ne'er wilt know.'

"Then the contadino drank from the cup, *e fu felice e benglieto per tutta la sua vita*—he was happy and gay as long as he did live.

"So it came to pass that Fauno changed his position, and now holds a cup in one hand and a bunch of grapes in the other.

"Now if a girl will drink of the water from that old fountain in good faith, she will certainly have a lover within a month.

"And to do this she must drink of the water at night, and then say:

"'Fauno, per quanto ai sofferto,
Ai trovato un contadino;
Che ti ha ben aiutato
Ed io sofro,
Perche non trovo
Un amante. Ti scongiuro
Di farmelo trovare
Tempo un mese,
Se questa grazia mi farai,
La tua tazza di vino empiro:
Eviva, Bacco, lo diro!'

Translation.

"Faun, while thou didst sadly suffer,
Still thou found'st some one to aid thee!
Even so I sadly suffer,
For I cannot find a lover;
By my suffering I implore thee,
Grant that ere a month has vanished

[*Here the petitioner drinks a glass of wine.*]

I may find some one to love me!
If thou'lt do for me this favour,
I with wine will fill thy chalice,
And cry out in praise of Bacchus:
Eviva, viva, viva Bacco!'

"This water is also very good for restoring health to weak and nervous people; it should for them be mixed with wine; and to those who cannot visit the fountain it may be sent in bottles, and it will aid all who drink it in faith, and who devoutly repeat the incantation. But those who do this without serious belief will only bring evil on themselves, or the very contrary of that for which they pray."

I have, in commenting another tale, spoken of the ancient and very natural belief that spirits dwelt in statues, which still exists widely spread in the belief that certain holy images have great power to heal certain diseases—of which I have daily confirmation where I dwell in Florence. But what is worth noting in this tale is the connection of the Faun with the healing magic well, just as his foregoers were identified with graves, nymphs, and fountains. Masius, in his *Studies from Nature*,[1] daintily describes why a living or running water, as in a spring, is so sweetly attractive, saying that "the fascinating transparency of the element" (which irresistibly suggests to us as in a glass something mysterious)—"the melodious rhythm of its bubbling flow—the gleaming green and blue upon its waves—do charm us in the silence of the night,"—as does the running like a living thing, which comes we

[1] *Naturstudien*, Leipzig, 1857. A pleasant book, of which there is an English version, I forget by whom.

know not whence to vanish in the unknown. And as Friedrich writes: "Of a truth water is a spiritual element, and speaks to us with soul's affinity. Spring, brook, and rivulet run ever on—an image of our restless, hastening life." Of which strange fascination, inducing men to sit by streams and fountains, he adduces several singular instances.

THE LEGEND OF LA VILLA SALVIATI AND OF LA VIA CANACCI

"She cut away no formless monster's head,
But one whose gentleness did well accord
With death as life . . . and for its tomb did choose
A garden-pot, wherein she laid it by."
—*Isabella, by* JOHN KEATS.

"Now lust of love hath lost all charm for him;
Let joys fly home to others if they will,
Bid merriment and Cupid speed in haste
Unto their goddess, whom he seeks no more;
Gloom and regret are recreation now,
And from their sanctuary far above
Virtue and Fame, her son, do call to him."
—*Musarion, by* C. M. WIELAND.

"Of all the devils in hell that be,
There is none like a woman's jealousy."
—*Abraham à Santa Clara.*

THIS story, as will be seen, does not properly belong to the Villa Salviati, but is told authentically of one of the family. But as it is attributed to that place by the people, I have let the title remain as I received it. I have not translated it word for word, because it required correction; neither have I inserted aught or added to it.

LA VILLA SALVIATI.

"Jacopo Salviati was a rich lord and a great admirer of beautiful women.

"He lived in his villa in splendid style, and had every evening a reception and banquet, to which were invited all his friends, and all the most beautiful courtesans of Italy regarded his house as their home. The life there was all wine, music, laughter, games, dancing, flowers, and un-

bounded liberty. It seemed as if the master had resolved there should be one place on earth without a shade of sorrow.

"But the most beautiful tapestry has its sorry side; the higher the river rises in a freshet, the lower it sinks in a decline; fruit and flowers are the fairest things on earth, yet they soonest decay and fade, and it needed no more than a severe attack of illness for the Signore Salviati to take an indescribable disgust, or to form a real and lasting repugnance for the life which he had led. His gallant friends and many beautiful women with wit and grace, and not without kindly feeling, came round him, but he had lost all sympathy for them, and his nature certainly changed; for, getting better, he remained the same, and the first thing he did was to intimate to his friends that the ladies should all leave the house as soon as possible, which naturally greatly diminished the gaiety of the villa and the number of guests of all kinds. Fill the cup too full, and it will spill over on the satin, and then a man wishes he had never filled it at all. Hence it came about that in those wild days so many rich men became monks, and people could not understand why. They filled the cup too full.

"As soon as he was able to endure a journey, the Signore Salviati went to the Toscana Romagna mountain country to visit a friend who had a castle somewhere about Forli or Rocca Casciano, hoping that the fresh air would do much *per ristabilirsi meglio in salute*—to re-establish his health, expecting also to be strengthened in mind by the society of true friends, who were not at all of the stamp or colour of those with whom he so long had filled his villa.

"Nor was he disappointed, being received with sincere joy; for, as his host said, 'Truly I have caught two pigeons with one pea this time; for I have not only once more my dear old friend Salviati, but also a pleasant guest, which is a gift of God to me nowadays, in this lonely place. Thou art like the sun, who rejoices all men with his rays wherever he visits, so much so, that it is a pity that he himself never knows it.'

"Then in intimate discourse the Signore Jacopo told his friend what a life he had led, all riot and no quiet; how he had fallen ill and become more sick in soul than in body to think of such sorry waste of talent and time, which now seemed to him as silly as children screaming up and down for diversion; and, moreover, that he now felt, what he never did before, what a fool he had been, and made for himself an evil name.

"To which his friend replied with a kindly smile:

"'What thou wert I too have been,
What thou saw'st I too have seen,
And in manner quite the same
Unto me an illness came,
Wherein, indeed, it seemed to me
All life had been a malady,
And sickness a recovery;
For as in strength my body fell,
My mind seemed ever getting well,
Till I regained a healthy sense
With the great med'cine—Penitence;
Which being done, as thou wilt prove,
I found me fit for noble love,
And wedded one who, as my wife,
Has purified and blessed my life.'

"'Yes, my friend Jacopo,' he continued, 'I am married, and what with my wife and a little daughter and a beautiful young cousin named Veronica, I am perfectly content, and I can think of nothing to add to my happiness, unless, indeed, it were to keep thee among us, and have thee in our family circle.'

"And saying this, he spoke prophetically, for when the Signore Salviati was introduced to the beautiful Veronica, it was like a glance of lightning; and the thunderbolt went home to the heart all in an instant for both of them; and no great wonder either, for they were called by those who told the tale in their time the most beautiful couple in all Florence, and that meant, indeed, in all Italy, for the Florentines or Tuscans were ever a handsome folk. So, as the proverb advises:

"'Ama chi t'ama;
Rispondi à chi ti chiama.'

"'Answer quick who calls to thee;
Let love to love an echo be.'

"So one being willing and the other eager, they soon came to an understanding, since, of all things on earth, love is the one which least endures being hid.

"'Amor, e tosse e rogna,
Celar non ti bisogna.'

"'Love or a cough or disease, I ween,
Are soon made known or quickly seen.'

"In fine, there was great love but little wooing, for they were very soon married, and lived in such a sea of delight and content that there was only one thing on earth which ever gave the Signore Jacopo an instant's sorrow, and that was when he reflected on the shameful life he had led, as would happen now and then, when he met some of his old companions and guests. Nor were the fair ladies whom he had once favoured, and now passed by, much pleased at the manner in which they had all been bundled out and sent packing from his villa, and one and all determined to play him an evil trick, whenever fortune should favour them.

"It is ever the one who loves the most who is most deadly in jealousy; for, as the proverb says:

"'Nè Amor, nè Signoria,
Non voglion compagnia.'

"'Neither Love nor Signorie
Wish for rival company.'

"And the wife of the Signor Salviati was a northern Romagnola, who have the name of being as desperately vindictive when wronged as they are devoted and strangely superstitious, for they worship old gods, and are heathen to this day in all things good or bad. And on the other hand, her husband quite forgot that a man who would go to such excess of debauchery as he had done, and then to the last step of penitence (of which the proverb bids us beware), and then again into a complete abyss of married bliss to the neglect of all the world without, could hardly fail to fall sooner or later into some new and absorbing passion; so true is it that we should never blow the bladder till it bursts if we fear a noise.

"Now the Signore Jacopo found one day among his treasures a carved ivory *scatola* or small casket of extraordinary beauty, with figures on it of loves and cupids, which had been given him by a beautiful *cortegiana Veneziana* in his sinful days, and instead of sending it back to her or giving it to the Church, he in a rage dashed it to the ground, and crushed it to pieces under his heel, though it was one for which the Pope himself would have been thankful. But when he had done this, he was not a little concerned to find that, as usual, there had been a mirror in the box on its bottom, and this too he had utterly destroyed. And this indeed troubled him not a little, for he had always been haunted by the saying:

" 'Should a mirror ever come
By chance unknown into your home,
Guard it as you would your wealth,
'Twill shield your life and bless your health.
But beware lest, when you take it
In your hand, by chance you break it.
'Tis a sign, and ever true,
Some dire disaster waits on you.'

"Now this mirror had come without his knowing it into his possession, and he found it had broken into thirteen pieces.

"Now soon after this he was passing through the Via della Scala in Florence, when there came up a tremendous storm, with such rain and hail that it seemed as if all the witches were at work together; and to avoid this he turned into the Via dei Canacci, which is a little street in which there was a small palace (*palazzulo*), under the gateway of which, or in the hall, he took refuge.

"And while he stood there, there came down the stairs a young girl of dazzling beauty, who, seeing him, smiled and said: 'Signore Jacopo, I beg of you do not stand here, but come up and honour our house with your presence.' And so, after exchanging courteous compliments on both sides, he complied, and having entered the saloon and taken a chair, asked with whom he had the honour to speak, and was told with the Signorina Catarina Canacci. And it was the same tale over again of love at first sight, as always happens when a man whom no girl can resist meets a girl who is perfectly irresistible.

"The end thereof being, that from that day the Signore Salviati went every day to the Casa Canacci, but however carefully he concealed his visits, they were found out by the *cortegiana* who had given Jacopo the box, who in turn soon conveyed the news to his wife, who at once set herself down to plot vengeance dire, dark, and terrible, which should be all the worse because she was really in love with her husband.

"And the end of it was that she went forth and bought a magnificent vase or *vaso di terra della Robbia*, and had inscribed on it in antique letters, Tradimento, or Betrayal. And then she obtained a beautiful bouquet of all the finest flowers in Florence and put them in the vase,[1] and amid them

[1] As some days elapsed before the *dénouement* of the story, I infer that the flowers were certainly growing plants.

a square of white parchment bearing in scarlet letters the word Sorpreso, or Surprise!

"The husband, seeing all this, asked what it meant; to which his wife replied, that in a few days, or on the thirteenth of May, she would give a fine feast, 'At which,' she added, laughing, 'you will see some one whom you little expect to meet.' It seemed indeed to the Signore Jacopo that there was something very mysterious in all this, nor did he much like the date of the thirteenth, nor such words as Treachery or Betrayal, but still set it all down to female caprice and let it pass.

"Now, when the thirteenth day of the month came, the Signora Salviati begged her husband to remain at home that day to receive expected guests, and, on the other hand, she sent a message, purporting to come from her husband, begging the Signorina Caterina to send away all her servants and be alone at home to receive Jacopo. All of which being arranged, she sent two desperate villains or bravos to the house, who without trouble murdered the poor girl, and, cutting off her head, as they were commanded to do, wrapped it in a cloth, put it in a jar, and carried the whole to the lady, who, delighted, took the head—and a ghastly sight it was!—and hid it among the flowers in the splendid vase which was on the dining-table.

"The Signore Jacopo was very much astonished that no guests arrived, but his wife persuaded him with jests and cajoleries to sit down at the table, till at last, when he asked the name of the visitor who was to be to him such a surprise, she replied:

"'What! don't you know? Who should it be but your dear Caterina Canacci. Look at her!'

"And saying this, she opened the flowers and showed among them the pale and bloody face of his murdered mistress!

"And as he gazed at it aghast, as one petrified with horror, his wife hissed in his ear:

"'*Caro mio marito*—my dear husband, I loved thee greatly, and as great was thy deceit, and such an injury I could not endure; I swore revenge, and I have had it in full, and care not now what may come'—*mi sono vendicata!*"

It is interesting to contrast this legend as narrated by the people with the authentic history as given by Horner and Hare. It is as follows:

"In the Via de' Pilastri, near the Church of San Ambrogio, a terrible tragedy occurred in 1639. In the reign of Ferdinand II. there lived here an elderly Florentine gentleman named Giustino Canacci, who had been twice married, and his second wife, Caterina, was celebrated for beauty and virtue. Jacopo Salviati, Duke of San Giuliano, was among her admirers, which excited the jealousy of his duchess, Veronica Cibo, a princess of Massa. She determined to get rid of her fancied rival, and Caterina having incurred the hatred of her stepson, Bartolommeo, he consented to guide three assassins, hired by the duchess, to this house. Here they murdered her with her maid. Caterina's head was then cut off and taken to the duchess, who concealed it in a basket of clean linen, which it was customary to place in her husband's apartment on the first day of the year. The duke uncovered the basket, and nearly fainted away on seeing the contents. Though the crime was of so heinous a nature, Bartolommeo Canacci alone suffered punishment; he was seized and beheaded, whilst the rest of the guilty ones escaped, the duchess leaving Florence in greater dread even of the fury of the people than of the justice of the tribunals. A well still exists in the Via de' Pentolini, into which the body of Bartolommeo is said to have been thrown."

I prefer the story as given by Maddalena. The idea of the head coming home, like that of a certain eminent statesmen, "buried in his shirt-collars" or "in the wash," is not romantic, and there is something unpleasantly suspicious in the statement that a lot of clean linen was annually placed by the fascinating Veronica as a New Year's surprise for her husband. It must have been a great rarity in the family. Perhaps it was her neglect of the laundry department which led to the whole tragedy. On the whole, I prefer the bouquet.

The Villa Salviati itself is at the corner where the Corso joins the Via del Proconsolo, and it is interesting as occupying the site of the ancient house of Folco Portinari, the father of the Beatrice of Dante. In its court is shown the *Nicchia* or niche where the poet is supposed to have watched and waited for his eight-year-old lady-love, and,

as Boccaccio tells us, "took her image so deeply into his mind that no subsequent pleasure could ever afterwards extinguish or repel it—she becoming in his more advanced age the frequent and woeful cause of his most burning sighs and of many bitter tears."

So it appears that the Villa Salviati does not lack association with a dismal tale after all. But it has also a pleasanter one. The great vocal artists Mario and Grisi dwelt there for several years before the death of the latter. I have the autographs of both as they were written for me. That of Mario contains in addition to his signature the following singular "sentiment"—"*Sono ammalato oggi*"—"I am unwell to-day," which was probably the most sincere—it being at the time the predominating—sentiment of which he was capable. To which Flaxius:

"So do they come like shadows, so depart—the grim tragedians of the olden time—the artists of a later day, who sing or act the desperate deeds done long ago.

> "'Tis all a wild phantasmagoria,
> So do we rise and so we pass away.'"

UGOLO AND GHERARDO.

A STORY OF LA VIA BALDRACCA.

"Yea, there are men like rats, y-born to steal
And live in darkness or in filthy ways;
And some like serpents slipping through the grass,
Or coiled in grass or flowers; and rat or snake
Is quick to bite for vengeance, and the teeth
Of both are charged with poison, like their souls."
—C. G. L.

I TELL this tale as it was told to me, though I have put it into smoother form:

"There was in the Via dell' Anguillara a palace belonging to an old gentleman who was very rich. He owned two large estates in the country, one of which was known as the Castello di Due Torri, the other as the Castello del' Uovo. He had also a house in the Via Baldracca, in which dwelt his intendente or steward, named Ugolo. Unto this man, in whom he had the greatest confidence, the old signore had trusted all his affairs; and the only child and heir of the old lord was a son named Gherardo, who indeed deserved to be favoured by fortune, since he was as noble by mind as by birth, honourable, manly, and generous.

"But it came to pass that in the castle and estate of the Two Towers everything, despite the best management, began to go from bad to worse; for, firstly, it was haunted by ghosts and witches, so that no one could be induced to live in it.

"Then the fields were devastated by storms, and every crop was destroyed by hail. It seemed as if the de'il had selected this estate to ruin it, for while others escaped, it was especially spoiled.

"The signore said, 'Tis a proverb, *Che il grano quando é nei campi, é di Dio e dei santi*—'When the grain is in the ground, God and the saints have care of it,' but it seems to me that

Satan alone has charge of mine. Ah well, I must sell the estate for whatever it will bring, since it only brings me into debt.' So Ugolo sold it for him at a very low price.

"Then the same thing happened with the Castel del' Uovo, and the lord signore dying very suddenly, Gherardo found that he had nothing left him but the palazzo in the Via Anguillara. So he dwelt in it, living by renting out its rooms.

"Among its tenants were a widow lady, who seemed to be about thirty-five years of age, yet who was very beautiful and *gentile* or refined, who had a charming daughter. With these Gherardo became very intimate, sympathising with them as people who were, like himself, very poor and obliged to keep up appearances, yet of gentle blood and culture. So it came to pass that he gave them their rooms rent free, and in the end they formed, as it were, one family, the signora being to Gherardo as a friend and mother.

"But even this felicity was soon disturbed, for, as the proverb says:

"'Non gridar pesci fritti
Prima d'esser presi;
Non mi dir oliva,
Prima che mi vedi 'colta.'

"'Fry not your fish
Before they're caught;
Cry not your olives
Till they are bought.'

"And so it was with Gherardo. For ere long his palace began to be infested with shadows which grew to ghosts, uncanny sounds, which became horrible, evil odours, poisoning all the rooms, tittering which increased to ghastly laughter, and, finally, apparitions of goblins, dead men in shrouds, monks, white, black, and grey, nuns with eyes of pale fire, and shrieks at midnight, the end of it being that all the tenants left, and Gherardo found himself desperately poor.

"Now there came one, and then two, and then more, who said that 'twas reported that the signora with whom he was so intimate was simply a witch, who was ruining his house and him; which seemed to him so ridiculous, that the next evening at supper he told her all he had heard. But what was his amazement when she replied:

"'It is all true, Gherardo; I am gifted with sorcery, and I came here to ruin this house, even as I ruined the two estates of thy father. But in all this there is a mystery.

"'Now listen with patience and I will tell thee all.

"'To-morrow the Signore Ugolo, who was for so many years the steward of thy father, and who is now thine, will invite thee to supper in the Via Baldracca, in that house of thine where he dwells. Then he will offer thee a thousand scudi for this house, and whatever it may be, do thou accept it. I shall be there with my daughter to serve thee at table. Assent to all that he proposes, appear to be agreeable; but, come what may, do not leave the house nor speak a word till thou hast heard all I have to say.'

"And Gherardo had such confidence in the signora, that without more ado he went the next day to the supper.

"The steward Ugolo made himself very hospitable and amiable, and, as the lady had foretold, he offered Gherardo a thousand crowns for his palazzo, to which the youth assented, whereupon the steward cried:

"'We must wet the bargain, and I have in my cellar some of the very best wine in all Tuscany. *Toppo!* Signora Beatrice, I beg you to bring a *fiascone*. Meanwhile, *caro signore*, we will pass into the next room, where I will pay you the money and give you a receipt. I have indeed paid you twice its value for that old haunted castle, but I have been long in your service, and am your friend.'

"But Gherardo said to himself, '*Frase*—'tis all talk! Now I indeed see that this scoundrel proves what the proverb says:

> "'Fammi fattore un anno,
> Se sara coglione sara mio danno.'
>
> "'Give me the care of that land of thine,
> And in a year it shall all be mine.'

"Then they returned to the supper-room, and on the table were two large beautiful cups full of wine.

"'Let us drink!' cried Ugolo merrily, and emptied his goblet.

"But Gherardo did not drink—he felt appalled, as if something terrible was at hand—and in an instant he saw Ugolo turn pale as death and heard him scream:

"'I am ill—dying—I die by poison.'

"'Yes,' cried the Signora Beatrice, 'thou art dying indeed, and the devil has at last got his own. Not content with having robbed Gherardo of all his property, thou must needs poison him, to cheat him out of the paltry price of his last house.

Know, thou vile wretch, whom I have hated to the death for years, and served as an ill-requited slave, that it was I who poisoned thee; and learn also that Gherardo will inherit every *quattrino* of thy stolen wealth. And so die!'

"As she said this he drew his last breath. The signora heaved a sigh, not indeed of grief, but of relief, and said:

"'How glad I am that he has gone to the devil—if the devil indeed cares to have such a pitiful villain! *Va e fatti rendere i quattrini in inferno, Signore Ugolo!*—'tis a good riddance of bad rubbish to bury thee, as we shall do anon. And now, my dear boy, listen to me!

"'I have killed that man, your old steward, without remorse, for he was a heartless villain. Your father trusted him in everything, treated him like a friend, heaped him with favours and hoped for his success. He repaid it by ruining his benefactor, whom he at last poisoned. That I could not prevent.'

"'He went to a witch and said to her: "I will pay thee well if thou canst cause the Castle of the Two Towers and the estate to be haunted and the crops destroyed." The witch knew it was beyond her power, and so gave the affair to me.

"'I was bound to thee, dear Gherardo, by many ties of love. Thy mother was of the fairy race and allied to me. Had I not undertaken to ruin thy father's property it would have been done by another. Yes, I wasted thy property, but advised the steward to buy and keep it, and keep with it all his savings, which were very great.

"'Then it came to pass that Ugolo was to sign for me one day an agreement that I should receive a hundred crowns for some of my evil work when it should be accomplished. I prepared two documents, exactly alike. One was the agreement, the other was a will by which he bequeathed all his property to you, stating that he had robbed you and wished to do you justice. I made him drunk with a potion which deprived him of half his senses, and so had no trouble in inducing him to sign the will. Here it is. Take it.

"'This evening he meant to poison you, but he drank the poisoned wine himself. Now thou knowest all.

"'But stay! Come with me into the cellar and see the last proof of his infamy.'

"They went together, and she showed him a recess or tomb in the wall, with a stone fitted to cover it.

"'That was to have been thy tomb. It shall serve for Ugolo.'

"Gherardo and Beatrice buried the steward.

"So Ugolo died and Gherardo inherited his wealth. He soon after married the daughter of Beatrice, and all lived happily together.

"But it is said that to this day the ghost of Ugolo haunts the old house in the Via Baldracca.

> "'When spiders spin their webs to prey on flies,
> Let them beware lest wasps get caught in them.'"

Truly a terrible mother-in-law. But as the story states that they all lived happily together, we may infer that people who are of fairy descent have mutual understandings and ways of their own, and are not as common mortals. There are glimpses of a strong character in Gherardo, as became his descent.

It may be observed that, while not reduced to a system, it is evident that in Tuscan tradition both witches and *fata*, or fairies, seem to be excluded after death from heaven, hell, or purgatory; that is, as belonging properly to the heathen stock, they go their own heathen ways. The good or white witch, or the magician who has done no harm, becomes a *fata*, who is, as a rule, benevolent, for the evil fairies are properly witches. And Bulwer intimates of the Rosicrucians, that there are men and women in ordinary life who, having a strain of witch, magician, or *fata* blood in their veins, are more or less looked after by their supernatural relations.

This may have originated in a curious fact, that when an ancestor has taken great interest in occult subjects, the tendency is often shown sometimes long after in a descendant. I myself know of two cases of ladies passionately addicted to folklore who are descendants, one of a Salem witch, the other of a similar sorceress.

"*Hæc fabula docet*," saith the experienced Flaxius, "that the most firmly established popular beliefs—as, for instance,

that the mother-in-law is an enemy of the human race as represented by the husband, is, if not an egregious error, at least one with very numerous exceptions; and where these occur, the kindly feeling is generally extreme. For to assume that all women are by nature such fools as to make themselves *hated*, when that hatred must infallibly cause the husband to make his wife unhappy, is preposterous. And I believe that this opinion is chiefly the result of that silliest of all schools of humour—the exaggerative—wherein everybody's nose is a foot long, every jest overdone and mannered, every uncle an old fool, and every mother-in-law a dragon.

"From all such follies,
Whatever they be,
Libera semper
Nos, Domine!"

THE PALAZZO STROZZINO

"Here I give you the marvellous history
Of an awful horrible mystery,
Of murder and crime
In the olden time,
Of hidden treasure
Beyond all measure,
Which happed to a lord who lived in a palace,
And had no cause to fear the gallows,
His heart being very remarkably callous,
As is charmingly set forth in *this* story."

To the south-west of the great Palazzo Strozzi, in the Via Tornabuoni, stands the smaller palace called *Il Strozzino* or *de' Strozzini*, of which I have the following singular legend:

Il Palazzo degli Strozzini.

"The Palazzo degli Strozzini is in the Piazza delle Cipolle by the Palazzo Strozzi. Its lords were usurers, who took one hundred per cent. interest, and after them all came one who was the worst, and yet he had a son who was as wasteful of money as his father was avaricious. And hence came terrible scenes, the father swearing and blaspheming in a manner which would make the hair rise on your head to hear it. And at last, by dint of dwelling ever on one thing and being always in a rage over it, it came to pass that the old man became as it were insane on the subject, and ever reflecting how he could keep his gains from being wasted.

"Now there was in the palazzo, concealed in some way in the wall, and unknown to any save the old lord, a room or two, and so he made an old mason come, and said to him, 'I desire that thou wilt come to-morrow and wall up this door, so that no one can perceive what has been done; and if thou wilt keep it a secret, I will pay thee well, and mind that thou dost thy work speedily and unseen.'

"And so he paid him in advance, and gave him, moreover, a bottle of very fine old wine. And the work was done, but the mason did not know that the old lord himself was in the secret chamber, where he had placed his vast treasure, in many bags of gold with jewels, also with much provision and wine. And what his scheme or plan was nobody can really say, whether he hoped to live there till his son should die or be impoverished, but it was plain that first of all he wished to keep his money and gloat over it, and left the end to fate, having the means to dig away the walls should he desire it.

"As for the mason, he took his tools and bottle of wine, and went to a shop where he had supper served, and then drank his wine, but he had barely finished it ere he fell dead, for it had been poisoned. And no one knew it or suspected the cause of his death, and so the secret passed away with him.

"The son and heir sought far and wide for his father, but all in vain. He wrote letters and sent forth messengers and offered rewards, but got no news for his pains. Then he began a wild and reckless life of debauchery, spending what money or wasting what means he had. So one farm went after another, all to gambling and to girls and every folly, till naught remained to him but the Palazzo Strozzino. And he had begun negotiations to sell it, when one night, whether it was in a dream or waking, there appeared to him a shadowy form, a form which became more and more distinct—the form of an old mason whom he remembered as always having been employed about the palazzo since he was a boy. And the spirit said:

"'Him whom thou deem'st long sped away
Was near thee still by night and day;
On evil deeds thou didst presume,
And drove him to a living tomb;
Great was his folly in his time,
And full as great thy reckless crime.
Yet, as I would not wish to see
The end of a great family,
I'll give thee yet a chance to thrive,
If thou wilt as a Christian live.
Remove the wall which here we see
And thou wilt read the mystery,
And learn where 'twas thy father fled,
And find a fortune with the dead.'

"Then the wall was taken away, and they found the body among the bags of gold, and the son, struck with remorse,

repented and became a good man and honourable citizen. So in due time he married, and, as the story ends, *così si gode il resto del danaro colla sua famiglia*—and so enjoyed the rest of his estate with his family."

With the exception of the ghost, there is nothing in this story which might not have really occurred—which remark I make in consequence of an incident which came, I may say, within the scope of my personal experience. A few years ago, a lady of the noblest family died in Venice, leaving an immense estate, such as had few rivals in Italy. I could fill several chapters with really interesting incidents and anecdotes relating to the extraordinary discoveries which were made after the death of the last Venetian proprietor, who had lived in absolute seclusion for fifty years, and who represented a family which had for six centuries been in the hereditary habit of hoarding up or collecting all kinds of objects, even to the dolls of its children. After the death of the last possessor referred to, an old female servant, who was the only depositary of the secret, revealed the existence of a million francs in old gold coins, hid away in some secret nook.

When we reflect on the great risks to which men of all classes were exposed during the Middle Ages of being deprived of any kind of ostensible property by the strong hand, it does not seem remarkable that there should have been hidden closets and buried treasures in abundance. It is not impossible, what with Socialist seizures and the decrease of interest, that men may revert to hoarding gold.

Yes, even since writing that last line, I read in *L'Italie* of July 30, 1891, how an immense treasure of very ancient gold coins has just been unearthed in the suburbs of Bologna; and there had been for centuries a tradition that there was a treasure there. When we reflect that for so many thousand years the earth was the only safety-bank known, as I have already said, and that

many must have died without revealing their hoards, it is indeed probable that there is much which will never be treasure-trove. Add to this the fact that an absurd law prevents the finder from becoming the owner, and we can understand why such *trouvailles* are generally hidden. There is now going on in England a case of very recent occurrence, referring to a poor man having found a golden chalice, or something of the sort, which was sold for £700, of which the finder never received a penny, which is a good example *pour encourager les autres* to hide and melt down every antique in precious metal.

"*Und noch weiter*—'and still wider.' Even in the sea, all the whales and sturgeons belong, *de facto* and *by law*, to Her Majesty the Queen, which, considering that whalebone is now worth £1000 per ton, and that my caviare costs me three shillings a tin, would amount to a pretty penny, if the august lady got it. And as Britannia-Victoria rules the waves, there is a still larger source of income awaiting her. For chemistry has ascertained that in every ton of sea-water there is one grain of pure silver in solution, all of which is rightfully the property of the crown; or more properly, including the previous rights, the Prince of Wales. Which offers a vast field for speculation as to the degree to which royal and ecclesiastical, or municipal or territorial rights may be carried out, according to the letter of the law.

> "'For I can see it writ as in a vision,
> Since in all lives there's some confounded flaw,
> We might the whole of us be sent to prison,
> According to the Letter of the Law.'

"And truly this comment would be most imperfect should I omit to state that in Florence the commonest term of abuse for a miser, niggard, churl, screw, skinflint, crib, scrimper, lick-penny, hunks, curmudgeon, Harpagon, Elwes, extortioner, close-shaver, gouger, cent-per-center, do or Jew, is a *Strozzino* or *Strozzinone*, the which term I heard applied no later than yesterday evening by my landlady to one who, if her tale be true, as I well wot it was, deserved the term in all its plenitude—according to the letter of the law."

A STORY OF LA VIA PORTA ROSSA, OR HOW SIGNORE DOZZI STOLE THE DONKEY

"Who stole the donkey? Tell us pray?
The man in a white hat, men say,
And more than that, do what we can,
We may not learn from mortal man.
But in the land of Tuscany
The tale is told as here you see,
How a young lord before the folk
Once stole an ass, and ran *a mok*."

WHEN we live in a city, it is often pleasant in certain places to recall old legends, or even the most trifling tales which belong to the *locale*, since association lends to each a peculiar romance. Such is the following story, from an old jest-book, which I always recall when passing through the narrow and ever-crowded Porta Rossa, which leads from the Via Tornabuoni, opposite the column of the Trinità. It is *not* literally translated.

IL ASINO.

"There were in the old times, when all kinds of odd dresses, strange dishes, freaks and flirty fancies were commoner or lordlier than at present, many gentlemen, young, and even old, who made it a profession *di far burle*, to play tricks and study out jokes; and when one made a hit of the kind, the whole town talked about it like bells, and made it the great news of the day. Ah well, the world was young then, and it laughed more.

"Now among these gay fellows was a young noble who was one day with some friends leaning against a shop in the Via Porta Rossa, when they saw a great stark, rough-and-tough peasant rushing along, his eyes staring wide open, going four feet at a stride, with the skirts of his robe between his legs,

and leading an ass which had to gallop to keep up with him—I believe that my ancestor (whoever he was four hundred years ago), as he stood there, thought it would make a good picture.

"'Now I will bet a supper for us all,' said the young gentleman, 'that I will steal that ass from that peasant while he is on the full run.'

"'It is impossible,' replied the Signore Strozzi.

"'It is *not* possible,' added the Marquis Pozzi.

"'It is beyond possibility,' rejoined the Count Cozzi; 'but we take the bet.' Cozzi was known as Cozzone, the 'horse-breaker,' among his friends, and he always accepted wagers, *in corso*, 'in course,' or running.

"'Done,' exclaimed Dozzi; 'twelve to one on it.' Dozzi was the young gentleman-joker.

"The Signore Dozzi ran after the peasant. On the way he picked up with a wink a rascally street-boy, who took in the whole worldly situation and entire task at a glance. There are some of the same sort still left in Florence, signore.

"When the peasant, still staring ahead and never looking behind, was stopped for an instant by the crowd, the Signore Dozzi with his sharp dagger at a single cut severed the rope round the neck of the ass, and the boy caught hold of the end, making an ass of himself for two minutes.

"The peasant proceeded, not noticing the change in animals, The Signore Dozzi mounted the donkey, and turning, rode in the opposite direction, and arrived in triumph before his friends.

"Anon the boy ceased to be an ass, that is, he let go the halter, and also made his *Vade retro*. The peasant, not feeling any pull, also retrospected, and found that he had lost his property.

"You have heard of Lamentations, signore; but those of the Old Testament and Rachel mourning for her children all rolled into one——"

"'Add those of Sancho in "Don Chisiotte,"' I added.

"'Certainly, signore—if necessary. Well, all their howling together was nothing to that of that contadino when he found that his friend and brother was gone. He sat down on a doorstep and yelled and wailed, and sung sad verses *alla contadinesca*, to a great sympathising crowd, till many wept with him.

"But when at last they were all about to move off to the

prefect to seek justice or vengeance, they were amazed to see trotting into their midst my Lord Dozzi mounted on the missing animal.

"There was a great rejoicing, and the signore giving the peasant a *fiorino*, converted his tears to smiles. But when he narrated the whole story unto all, there was a storm of applause, and the tale still lives.

> "'So the signor won his wager,
> And the peasant got his gold,
> And 'twas thus that people frolicked
> In the merry days of old.'"

This tale, which is told among the people, may also be found in divers jest-books—notably in the *Facetiæ Diverse* of 1636, which I have partly followed in my narration. It is curious as indicating the great general public interest taken in the current joke of the day—whatever it was—which thing existed to a certain degree in American cities long after it had disappeared in England.

With this is connected another story of the same stamp, which I am pleased to find attributed to the same gentleman, who appears to have been a youth who made it lively for Florence with his *repues franches à la* François Villon, while he lasted. It is as follows:—

The Lost Sheep.

"Yet another trick did this same jester play on a butcher in Florence who lived opposite San Pietro. Now, it being hard upon the time of Carnival, the latter had displayed before his shop in tempting show the carcasses of several lovely sheep, suggesting many a fair roast and fine chop—*costerelle*, *costoline*, *ammorsellato*—minces, ragouts, and all.

"'Which of those do you think is *our* sheep?' inquired Signore Dozzi of Strozzi. (They were all there, with a reinforcement of the Brotherhood.)

"'If I am not mistaken,' replied Strozzi, 'it is that beautiful one in the middle, with eyes like those of the Contessina Giulia Salviati.'

"'Yes,' added the Marquis Pozzi, 'you ought to know them by this time—she has thrown them at you often

enough. That is indeed our own dear little sheep. *Propriè!*'

"'Our actual pet lamb,' swore Count Cozzi, 'gone astray."

"' Rifachelo co' pisellini, gliè bono!
Pessedici l'agnello, pessedici!'

"' Cooked again with peas, 'tis very nice,
Lamb! and sixteen *soldi* is the price!'

chanted Pozzi, imitating the cry of the *agnellaio* or lamb-butcher's vendor, as you may hear it even to this day in Florence. 'We will have our lost sheep—with peas.'

"'Now observe,' said the noble Dozzi; 'this is the correct game! Stretch yourselves, signori, along the street at distances, like angels on a church-roof. I will bolt with our property; and when the *beccajo* pours forth from his shop on the chase, and asks which way Paris has fled with Helen, you will tell Menelaus——'

"'Many lies, I fear,' added Cozzi. 'I am sure that the sheep will wander a devious path ere it be cooked.'

"'And do ye all,' exclaimed Dozzi, 'as soon as ye have told the butcher where to go, tell all the town to tell him the same thing. Spread it out broad and thick as a contadina's pancake.'

"So having disencumbered himself of cloak and sword, to be in light marching order, Dozzi, who could run like a deer, waited till the butcher had gone into the back-shop, and catching up the pretty sheep, tossed it over his shoulder and ran like the devil. An instant after, the butcher emanated from his shop, missed the sheep, and raising a scarlet hue and cry, shot up the street till at the Via Fiesolana he met with the Marquis Pozzi.

"'Have you seen anybody go by with a sheep?'

"He put the question so abruptly that the Marquis, being startled, in his confusion answered erroneously:

"'Yes, down the Orojuolo towards the Duomo. Then the first turning to the left on the right hand, at the left three times round the corner, and then ask at the pastry-cook's.'

"The butcher did not wait to hear him out, but dashed *ventre à terre* like a rocket with its tail on fire after his mutton. And a furlong later on he found the noble sportsman Cozzi.

"'*Ha veduto passare uno con un castrone scorticato addosso?*—

Hast thou seen any one with a skinned sheep on his back pass by?' gasped the butcher.

"'Was he a tall man about four feet high, smooth shaven with heavy black beard and greenish-pink mustachios?'

"'Yes, yes, yes,' cried the butcher, 'only tell me quick which way he went.'

"'With a small mosquito tattooed on the inside of the third finger, and a brass ring on his left big toe?'

"'Yes, yes; where did he go?'

"'Ah! it was my long-lost brother!' cried Cozzi. 'Friend, I will run with you for a pint of wine. Follow me!'

"Saying this, he cast himself forth into the beautiful night, and the two went like greyhound and gazelle, frisking, scouring, scampering, tearing like mad, till Cozzi had led his follower down the Calzaioli, and so on through the Signoria and Ufizii, where he vanished. But there was a third relay, and a prompt informant all ready to relieve him, who guided the butcher along the Arno to the Ponte Vecchio, where they found a fourth, and anon a fifth and sixth, and so on until it appeared to the butcher that everybody in Florence had seen the man with the sheep except himself; and as one said it was his cousin, and the other his son, and so on, he began to believe that the thief was *cognato* to the whole country. And in this manner they run him on, until, as the Florentine quaintly phrases it, 'he had not another yard of go left in him,' when they mercifully left him to get home as well as he could.

"Now by about fourteen o'clock the next day all Florence had the whole story, and everybody, including Busybody, was industriously inquiring of his neighbour, 'or any other man,' 'Have you seen the man with the sheep?' The Grand Duke asked it as a first question of the new French ambassador, who thought it referred to the Duke di Pizzicagnolo, who had just received the order of the Lamb, and answered 'Yes;' and a friar who had studied in Spain under Fra Gerundio de Zerotes made it the text of a great sermon, '*Vidisti hominem secum.*'

"The butcher was much astonished that same morning at receiving an invitation to dine with the Count Dozzi at his palace. He went in his best, and was courteously received, but was not a little amazed at meeting all the gentlemen who had directed him in the chase of the night before.

"When there was borne in by two servitors a tremendous platter with a silver cover three feet long, which was removed with great ceremony to the sound of music, and all present

beheld a sheep roasted whole, stuffed with pistachios and raisins and figs, and beautifully bedecked with roasted birds and *fois de volaille, et cetera, aux truffes*, there was a roar of laughter borne out by the clash of cymbals and the crash of drums, and then one long wavering, solitary trumpet-call, and Signor Dozzi spoke:

"'Signore Beccaio, have you seen the man who stole the sheep?'

"'Yea, by St. John, I deem I see him now!' answered the bold butcher with a smile; 'though it was not in this palace, but in that of the Bargello where I expected to find him.'

"'Well, Master Butcher, we have had our fun, and mean to pay for it, so fix thy price.'

"Now this butcher was a *galantuomo e dabbene*, a right good fellow and honest; so he answered:

"'As for the *fun*, if ye call it fun to run all over Florence at full speed, I had more of it than all of you. And as for paying for the sheep, signore, I will pass that over on one stern condition, which is, that as I have provided the food for this feast, the banquet shall be regarded as one given by me, and that ye hold yourselves as my guests.'

"There was another roar of laughter at this speech, and an applauding cry of 'Long live our host the butcher!' And from that day he did a roaring business, and in due time bought himself a fine palace in the Via Fiesolana, and on it there is a shield with a lamb holding up a cross like a parasol. And when anybody jeeringly asked him, 'Have you seen the man with the sheep?' he replied:

"'Truly I have, and that where you are little likely to see him—at a supper in one of the greatest palaces in Florence, among our noblest lords.'"

This tale turns on a kind of jest which is but little known in England, but which was common in the United States before the civil war. It consisted of sending a victim about from post to pillar to find some imaginary person. In 1849 or 1850, when everybody was slightly insane as to gold in California, the mere mention that a new-comer from the new Ophir had inquired for anybody was enough to make anybody believe that a fortune was seeking him. To one of these hopeful beings a bar-keeper said one morning:

"Have you seen Frank MacLaughlin?"

"Who is he?"

"A man just returned from California—he says he's got something for you. Guess he's now at the Dewdrop Inn."

The victim swallowed the bait and a cocktail, and set out on the chase for Frank MacLaughlin. The barkeeper at the Dewdrop Inn took in the situation at a glance, and sent him farther on. Then the man himself, finding himself hoaxed, hoaxed others, and the barkeepers catching the idea, sent away all their customers to find fresh MacLaughlins in their turn. All New York rang with the joke—there was a poem on it—and another phrase added to the great dictionary of American slang.

"*Hæc fabula docet*," here commentates our Flaxius, "that there are certain strangely quaint questions which are continued and mooted, considered and moralised upon through the ages without being settled. Even as a rivulet which dryeth up in summer only to become a tremendous torrent in the spring, do they rise and fall from year to year; for man may come and man may go, but they keep on for ever. Now one of these is the very antique *questio vexata*, 'WHO STOLE THE DONKEY?' which appears in an Egyptian papyrus, which is darkly set forth in the 'Golden Ass' of Apuleius, and again reflected in the Æsopian fable of the theft of the shadow of the ass by the youthful Cretan, which is believed to mystically mean the stealing of the soul by Typhon. And even so hath it been considered since days of yore as a kind of esoteric watchword among men of genius, or a secret sign, as ye may see by passages in the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' 'Don Quixote,' 'The Sentimental Journey,' *Die Abderiten*, and Heine's *Reisebilder*. Perdy! it is indeed wonderful, yea, *awful* to consider that there is no ancient mythology in which the mysterious obtainment of the donkey does not find place, it being, as it were, a proof of having attained to the highest initiation! Now in modern times, as shown by a strange romance which appeared in *Punch* on a time, the question is settled by declaring that he who stole the donkey

was the man in the white hat, regarding whom I refrain from further discussion, my only object being to note the great antiquity of the subject, and the fact that it finds a place in the sublimest mysteries and greatest works of literary art of all bygone epochs of humanity!"

THE GRAND DUKE, OR THE NOVEL OF IPOLITO THE TRUE-HEARTED MAN

" If there bee of friendes two
Truly to eche other true,
Either working like a brother
With all hearte to aid y^e^ other,
Fewe there are i' the worlde's mass
Who know what theye can bringe to passe.
—C. G. L.

"THERE was once in Florence a Grand Duke who was indeed a noble gentleman, but who had become disgusted with all the tribe of courtiers and flatterers round him, since, as he declared, it might be said of every soul of them, *bell' a vista, dentro trista*—'fair without and foul within'—'honey on the tongue and poison in the heart.'

" 'Ell' e fatta come la castagna,
Bella di fuori, e dentro la magnagna.'

" 'Like a chestnut, fair to see,
But rotten within as rotten can be.'

"So he loved to go out alone by night in disguise—*girovagare per la città*—to wander wild in corners of the town to see something of people as they really were.

"But unfortunately there are some who are by nature very nasty, and the Duke one night chanced in a house of low resort or evil fame upon a precious party of such people, who first drugged him with opium, then robbed and beat him, and finally threw him for dead into the street.

"Now there dwelt in Florence at that time a gentleman named Ipolito, who was of good family, learned, and, as the saying was of another clever Florentine—apt as Vaccuccia at everything. And he was of a kind heart and charitable.

"He, passing by, found the Duke nearly dying; so he bore him into his own house and took all possible pains to restore him, never dreaming who the sufferer was, and least of all

supposing that this apparently poor devil who had been hauled headlong out of one of the most infamous dens in the city could be the Grand Duke. And yet Ipolito was very learned, so that if not quite a conjurer, he was half a magician, and when he set his wits to work with a will and saw his way, could work wonders and read men like books, as this tale will indeed show.

"But even with the Duke, who was very badly dressed, Ipolito observed that the hands were white and the face refined and handsome. 'Tis a gentleman,' he said, 'though he may be poor.'

"Now when the Duke came to himself, he said to Ipolito, 'Why do you take such care of me, who am only a poor devil, who can never repay you in any way?'

"Ipolito replied: 'That you are poor, I plainly can perceive, and so am I. But poverty goes hand in hand with philosophy, and also with charity. And truly I declare that I am at ease regarding all gratitude, if you are simply honest. For two men, however poor they may be, if they have true hearts and brave, can do more for one another than any two rich men can—such as the rich generally are; and if all poor men did but know this and would act wisely on it, there would be little suffering in this life. And there is no greater folly than doing good to a rascal or a fool, but nothing better than to benefit a gentleman.

"'I do not know how it is,' continued Ipolito, speaking to the Duke, still thinking he was a poor man, 'but you seem to be a gentleman, and if you really are one, glad and well pleased am I to have helped you, for I know that some time or other in the long-run you will do me a good turn, and anyhow 'tis a pleasure to do such a good turn to one of the brotherhood, as I see you are.'

"Now, if all the geniuses in all the world had combined to say something to please the Duke, they could not have succeeded as Ipolito did with these few simple, frank words. 'I verily believe,' said the Duke to himself, 'that I have found the man I want. Let me try!'

"So he said to Ipolito:

"'I will make a serious agreement with you. I will do everything in my power to benefit you, and you shall do the same for me. Now what is it you most desire, Ipolito?'

"The host replied:

"'What I most desire is far beyond my utmost hope; I am

a fool to wish it—as great a fool as was Martino d'Amelia,[1] who believed that the star Diana was his wife. My Diana is the hope to have fifty crowns a month, to live in a fine palace, to move in the society of great and cultured men, where there is a great library, with work befitting a gentleman and scholar, for though I am as poor as you are, I believe that I am *that.* But let my dream go—it will come true when Easter falls in August, when we shall see white flies and the devil is made Pope.'

"Then the Grand Duke laughed *in petto*, or to himself, and thought:

"'Truly it will be an easy thing for me to give this Martino his Diana, but all the good he can ever do for me, I ween, will go without cramming into the mouth of a gnat, and never choke it. In faith, I owe him much more than fifty scudi a month and free quarters in my palace. *Andiamo!* but I fancy that all the benefits henceforth will be like the handle of the jug of Pietro Sgabello, which was all on one side.'

"Then speaking aloud he said:

"'Friend Ipolito, I fear that I can do but little for thee. However, for a beginning, I think I can manage to obtain for thee a chance to dine in a palace. By good luck I have a cousin, a priest, who is admitted to the court of the Grand Duke; we will visit the good man, and I will commend you to him. You are both men of letters, and it may be that we may manage through him—who knows?—to get an invitation to dinner. *Per Bacco!* I'll not swear to it, but as unlikely things have come to pass. Anyway we must push a little to get on. *Tenteremo!*

> "'Ben faremo, ben diremo,
> Mal va la barca senza remo.'
>
> "'If we want the boat to go,
> We must set to work and row.'

"'A man like thee should grasp at every chance, *cospetto!* But do remember to be very careful how you act, *diavolo!* I don't want to bring an ass into a hall who may get me kicked out. Do not be too forward nor too backward, take it discreetly; perhaps we may catch a fish after all. *Chi sa?* Even as poor devils as we are have got on at court:

[1] Unquestionably a form of Endymion, who is found in another legend with a changed name. Diana is the moon.

"'Chi sa? Chi sa?
Evviva l'opportunità!'

"'Who knows what may be?
Hurrah for the opportunity!'

"So it was arranged, and the next day the two went together to the palace. The Signore Ipolito appeared very properly clad, and looking at the Grand Duke, he said:

"'But, my dear fellow, how do you ever expect to get in, looking such a tatterdemalion as you are? *Sarete discacciato!* you'll be fired out like an arrow into outer darkness.'

"'Oh, never mind me—*I'll* do,' replied the Duke. 'I'll just drop in to my cousin's room before dinner and borrow a suit. Just keep your eye on me, and see if I do not come out *vestito decentemente*—looking decent.'

"So they entered the palace, and the Duke whisked out of sight to see his cousin, first whispering a word in the ear of a lackey, who forthwith took Master Ipolito into the dining-hall, where he had a place given him at the table. Truly it was among *la gente di basso cete* or the humble guests, who sat below the salt, but Ipolito was none the less pleased for all that.

"Then, after a quarter of an hour's waiting, trumpets sounded, music rang, and the Grand Duke, magnificently arrayed—*vestito superbamente*—entered surrounded by his *cortège.*

"Ipolito was indeed amazed, and doubted at first his very senses, clever conjurer as he was.

"The Duke looked round at all present, and then suddenly exclaimed, pointing at Ipolito:

"'Who the devil is that man there?'

"'I do not know, your Highness,' replied the *camerière.*

"'Make him come up here, and give him a seat by me,' said the Duke. And when this was done, his Highness exclaimed:

"'*Benevenuto siete, voi, Signore Ipolito.* Be thou boon-welcome, Master Ipolito! Now will we drink a hearty glass together! My lords,' he continued, raising his voice, 'let me present to you the most gallant gentleman in Florence, who yesterday evening saved my life.'

"And when Ipolito was seated, as the dinner went on the Duke asked him quietly—

"'Well, will you be content to live here, with fifty crowns a month, as my private secretary, with free use of the library, a seat at my table, meeting all the scholars and other folk of Florence?'

"'*Vuole un' anitra a nuotare?*—Would a duck swim?' replied Ipolito, who was installed forthwith in office.

"'What did you think of my company at dinner yesterday?' said the Duke suddenly to Ipolito, as the latter was writing to dictation the next day.

"'I think, your Highness, that there were among them three of the greatest scoundrels I ever met in all my life. One of them had poison in his pocket, and they endeavoured during all the meal to find an opportunity to give it to you. They spoke together in a language which I understood, but which they believed no person present knew. And at one time, before everybody present, their leader succeeded, by sleight of hand, in dropping some of the powder in your Highness's glass. But I fortunately removed it.'

"'I remember,' said the Duke slowly, 'that once during the evening thou didst, as I thought, very carelessly indeed, empty my glass instead of thine own. Was *that* the poison? How art thou then alive?'

"'Highness, I had an antidote, and I contrived to spill most of the wine.'

"'Which I, noting, thought thee a clumsy fellow, hardly fit for a courtly table. Aye, thus it was I mistook good for bad, misunderstanding the noblest risk of life for want of respect.'

"The three conspirators were at once arrested, sent to the Bargello, and executed.

"'*Diavolo!*' said the Grand Duke to himself as he looked at Ipolito, who, happy as the day was long, sat at a table drafting a treaty—'that man, after all, *tiene l'equilibrio contra me*—holds the balance against me. He keeps me in his debt, all I can do. Yes, he's stronger than I thought. Ah well! an honest friend is worth more than riches. I hoped to pay all the bill, and lo! he has settled it himself! He has saved my life twice, and I dare say when I double his salary, as I intend to do to-day, he will go and save it again to-morrow, just to keep ahead of me, the scamp! Now I see that poverty is no reason why a man should not be noble and independent. *Povertà non fa che l'uomo non sia generoso*—want of wealth is no excuse for not being generous. He who knows how to receive should also know how to give.'

"Two together can do more for one another than three separately can do for themselves, and three more than seven, that is, if all be loving, zealous, and true or earnest in one

another's interests. But it is in this last that the whole truth lies, since without truth there is no real union."

Of which tale the story is given in detail as I received it—the manner of telling it being mine own.

To which the immortal Flaxius doth add:—

"This fable teacheth a great lesson, sir. For as it hath been estimated that one man can by his labour maintain seven others, so is it true that any two, doing their best in simple honest faith, can marvellously assure their mutual happiness. And when you meet with any one who has nothing but complaint to make of everybody, or hear of a man who is always persecuted by relentless foes, and is always everywhere a victim of calumny, rest assured that such people have never acted on the moral of this tale.

> "'There are faggots and faggots,' the wise man said,
> Who deeply the book of life had read;
> 'Some which are tied by fastenings stout,
> And some which are loosely lying about.'"

LEGENDS OF LA VIA DEL CORNO

"Abutebatur igitur ea etiam in eodem lecto, cubante marito, invisibiliter impurissimus ille succubus vel spiritus, et incredibili vexabat libidine."—*Tractatus de Confessionibus Maleficorum et Sagarum, by* PETER BINSFELD, *Doctor of Theology*, 1596.

"Sintemal Ubricus Molitor erzehlet das in der Historia des heiligen Bernhardi gelesen werde, das ein Teuffel *Incubus* viele Jahre mit einen Weibe gebuhlet, da der Mann in demselben Bette dabey gelegen, welcher aber von demselben gottlosen Wesen nichts empfunden noch gemercket habe."—PETRI GOLDSCHMIED'S *Hexen- und Zauberer-Advocat*, 1705.

"Leporem fecisti."—*Father Tom and the Pope.*

"Lepus quasi levi-pes."—*Old Saying.*

THE Via del Corno is a narrow street which runs from the Via del Leone to the Via delle Serve Smarrite. According to history, it took its name from that of the family Del Corno, famous in the days of the Republic, which owned this street, and had for coat of arms a cornette or small silver horn in an azure field. This family was extinguished by the death of Donato di Giovanni d'Agostino del Corno in 1693. The police, if questioned as to the immediate scene of the story, would, if they knew Latin, probably observe with a smile, "*Diu servabit odorem.*" It is indeed curious to observe that the legend of the horn and of the servant-maids who went astray should coincide so curiously with the character which the palazzo referred to has borne "since time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary."

I give this story, as I did the two preceding, literally from the originals as regards *incident*, though I have told in my own manner what would hardly have been worth following *exactly* as it was given:

La Via del Corno.

"The Via del Corno takes its name from *corno*, a horn, which, like *cornuto*, signifies a man whose wife is unfaithful to him. And of this street are several stories, as there are regarding the large house at the end, where what I am going to tell took place; and the lesson which the tale tells is fourfold: *Firstly*, that no man can escape his destiny, as befell Il Ciga of Siena, who, to escape the prophecy that he would die by hanging, tried to drown himself. But certain sailors, seeing him struggling in the waves, out of pity threw him a cord, which caught round his neck, so that when they drew him out, lo! he was strangled. *Secondly*, that no one, whatever his good fortune or virtues may be, should make too much show or boast thereof, lest it should happen to them as it befell Beccone di Perugia, who had such a fine house that he must needs sit on the roof-tree or ridge thereof, blowing a trumpet in the pride of his heart, when there came, alas! a high wind which blew him over and killed him. *Thirdly*, that when a woman gives a man the mitten, or a basket, or cold water, or a refusal, she should hand it to him gently, and not throw it at his head, else that may happen to her which came to Paolo Vitelli, who threw a stone at a man, who caught it in his hand and threw it back, so that Vitelli was slain. And *fourthly*, that no woman or man should be utterly condemned for having done anything wrong, until we know all about it, since even the Calavrese who boiled his grandmother alive in a kettle did so believing—as was found out after he had been hanged for it—that she would thereby be made young again. All of which things are set forth in this story of what befell in the house No. 1 of the Via del Corno.

"For there dwelt in that house ages ago, or it may be even earlier, a handsome man of good estate and great family, who had a very beautiful wife, the two being desperately in love one with the other, and this love, instead of decreasing with time, seemed rather to grow. And truly there was no great fault to find with all this, nor would it have been anybody's business, if the happy pair had not had such a very unhappy and aggravating fashion of intruding their bliss on all their less fortunate friends. For they each firmly believed, and made great show of their belief, that they were the only faithful pair in Florence, and treated everybody else as if they

were shameful sinners, as a matter of course, and all the world, as regarded morals and manners, an age behind them.

"It had happened some time before the marriage of this rather too happy couple that the lady had been desperately loved by a young gentleman, whom she had refused, and that with so many jeers and sneers and causeless cruel mockery, that he fell ill and died, although it was believed that there was something mysterious in his nature, some declaring that he had become a wizard after he had been refused, so that in dying he might be revenged on the lady. For it is said that witches and the like return to earth to work out revenge on those who have treated them cruelly or caused them to commit suicide or die.

"However this may be, when dying he sent for her, and said, 'Thou didst treat me cruelly in life, but in death and in time to come thou shalt be mine. Now thou art married, and thy husband has often mocked me because I failed to win thy love, and ridiculed me with his greater fortune, but it shall all be the more to your shame. And mark my words, thou shalt yet be mine, yet from no love which I bear, but out of revenge.' Saying this he died.

"And very soon after the husband observed that his wife was growing pale and miserable, that she frequently sighed as if she had some great trouble on her mind, and often seemed to have been weeping. And when he asked her if she did not love him, she replied, 'Yes, yes, more than ever,' but remained as sad as ever, so that he too fell into great trouble. And the cause of it was this, that from the day of his death, the young man, or his spirit, visited her nightly in dreams, compelling her by some fascination to love and embrace him, and treating her as an absolute slave and plaything of passion. When she awoke, she was mad with rage at the spirit, and felt as furious as she was degraded at the utter humiliations she had undergone; but there was no help for it. And what made it worse was, that in her waking hours she loved her husband more than ever, and would not tell him of her visions, knowing that it could not fail to make him miserable, and suspect her fidelity.

"And to add to all this grief, the young wife found that she was about to become a mother, and that most certainly by the spirit. All of this show of grief was noted by the neighbours and others who had suffered from the arrogance of the pair, and as they observed that the wife was miserable

as well as about to become a mother, they soon began to repeat that the husband was jealous and suspected his spouse. So it went on till the Feast of St. Martin was near, and then scandal broke out in earnest, for there appeared every morning on the walls of the house pictures of hares drawn with charcoal, and on the day itself a great pair of ox-horns, with the verse:

"'Now there comes St. Martin's day,
Which is, as all men truly say,
The festival
Of wittols all
(*La festa dei becchi e dei cornuti*),
Fall in the ranks, as is your duty.
Remember that you by fate were born
To live like your friends in the Street of the Horn.
This is the way of your wife, O friend!
This is the way that pride must end.
As you will see, your lady fair—
Beware! Beware!
Instead of a son will bring you a hare!'

"And it all came to pass as the writing predicted. For when the day came, there was a great crowd in the street in anxious anticipation, all whooping and jesting. And the expected infant was indeed a full-grown hare, which, escaping from the hands of all present, leaped through the window into the street, where it dashed away, followed in full cry by all the mob, who had a merry chase of it, but never caught the animal that ever I heard of; which is not unlikely, considering all the circumstances which attended its birth. Nor do I know what became of the couple whose pride had such a fall; all that is remembered is that since their time the street has been known as the Via del Corno."

It may very well be observed that, so far as the incidents are concerned, I might very well have given this legend the go-by, but it contains several items of too much interest to have the degree of G.B. thus hastily conferred upon it. For though it may be truly said of it that, like the cloth of Minuccio, if not long, it is very *broad*, yet even in this artistic "breadth"—which I once heard it asserted should be the *sine qua non* of a good novel—there are several striking patterns of design. The first of these is the belief that a man who has been

greatly wronged by any one can by dying become an avenging spirit. This idea is at the present day so current in India, that among all classes nothing is so dreaded as that an enemy, by committing suicide, can bring, as a Nemesis, all his wrongs upon the one who has driven him to despair. Indian tradition abounds in legends founded on this faith.

Again, we have the avenger appearing as a *succubus* or amorous spirit, not in a spirit of love, but of love to hatred turned. In the vast literature of demonology and witchcraft there is not a single book or treatise in which the *succubus*, often confounded with the *incubus* or nightmare, is not a prominent figure. On this subject it is enough to say that it is interesting to observe that the old belief still survives in current Italian tradition.

Why St. Martin should be so curiously identified with domestic infidelity is beyond my power of conjecture. Yet, for some strange reason, this saint always appears in popular tradition as associated with erotic subjects. The goose, which is specially a type of productiveness, is sacred to him, as Friedrich has set forth in full in his *Symbolism of Nature*. "In the old almanacs St. Martin's day is specially designated by the picture of a goose." The goose and the hare are identified as symbols not only of productiveness, but of watchfulness. Martin, like St. Antony, who is also a wizard saint, was noted for having been tempted by beautiful demons or *succubæ*.

St. Martin in vulgar tradition appears not only as a benevolent saint, who shared his cloak with a beggar, but also as a genial *bonus socius* or boon companion, who loved a joke, as is shown by a German song:

> "Sanct Martin war ein frommer Mann,
> Trank gerne cerevisiam,
> Und hatt' er kein pecuniam,
> So liess' er seinen tunicam."

Yes, everything connected with this reverend saint is

merry and jolly. The only adjuration which Abraham a Santa Clara makes to him in his *Gehabe Dich Wohl* sermons is, "What thinkest *thou* of the clergy, holy Martin? thou who, at the banquet of the Emperor Martiani, didst drink to the chaplain before toasting the Kaiser!"

Last of all, this rather ghastly legend ends with a wild hunting of the hare, which seems to turn the whole into a joke. A hare dashing across the street was, from ancient times, an omen of evil. "*Inauspicatum dat iter oblatus lepus.*" The Rabbis, as Sir Thomas Browne observed in his *Vulgar Errors*, regarded the hare as such a type of lubricity that they forbade its flesh to be eaten, and it is remarkable that among the relics of prehistoric races the absence of the bones of this animal renders it certain that they did not use it for food. It was stricken out of the Mosaic *menu* in order to comply with this ancient and inveterate superstitious prejudice.

"*Lepus occurrens in via signum futuri periculi*," that the hare in the way was the sign of danger, was so generally believed, that Johannes Prætorius, who was in a way the first folk-lorist, devotes a chapter to the subject in his *Glückstopf*, 1669, which work is a marvellously curious and wildly erudite discussion of all the most popular superstitions of his time. On which subject the shrewd Prætorius remarks: "Truly, I hold with Zeiler, Ursinus, and others of the learned, that 'tis *not* well to see a hare in the road. Verily, 'twere far better roasted and on the table." Yet, to give Count Eberhardt von Wurtemberg and Martin Luther a fair show, he repeats their tales, how the devil appeared to them both in the form of hares, ending by shaking his head at it as all folly, yet quoting three scholars to prove it. Archelaus, Plutarch, and Philostratus all believed that the hare was hermaphrodite (*vide* Sir T. Browne, *Vulgar Errors*), and that eating its flesh was very conducive to lasciviousness.

There are frequent hints of this in the vulgar jests of the Middle Ages, and there is probably a re-echo of them in this Italian tale.

There are scores of legends to the effect that witches and evil spirits particularly affect the form of hares, and one of these, cited by Wolfgang Hildebrand (*Goetia vel Theurgia*) from a writer named Butner (*Epitome*), is curious enough to be repeated:

"It befell in Wittenberg in 1572, that the nobles had in winter a hunt for hares by night, but for a time saw neither a hare nor squirrel. At last they saw one of the former on the snow and gave chase. But what was their horror at finding, after a time, that they had ridden over the frozen Elbe without knowing it. So they thanked God, who had saved the lives of the just and pious. And, as soon as they were out of danger, the ice broke with a tremendous cracking and noise. *Nisi Dominus justorum vitam, servasset Leporinus insidias, id est Diabolicas præstigias et technas amorisset.*"

"*Videlicet!*" quoth Flaxius:

"Four Germans riding on the ice,
All of a winter's night,
When Pussy saw them, in a trice
She scampered out of sight.

Now had these Deutschers stayed at home,
Or ridden on dry ground,
I'll bet a cake they had not come
So near to being drowned.

Then here's a health to hunters all!
Let us hope the Hare still thrives;
Since she was so convivial
As to save four Dutchmen's lives!"

A LEGEND OF THE MEDICI

"These
Were Medici, and in their veins the tide
Of passions ran like pent-up channel seas,
Whose foamy jaws devour the bulwark wide,
And haul the labouring frigate on her side."
Traditions of Tuscany, by D. OGILVY.

A GROUP of houses opposite the Ghetto, now destroyed, was regarded as the original dwelling-place of the Medici family, and it is possibly to one of these dwellings that we may refer the following legends, in which, as in all in this work, the story is translated *accurately*, though not strictly *verbatim*, because the originals, being given just as told by very ignorant people, would not bear it. For I have not *one* of these manuscripts in which words are not recklessly misspelled and run together in the heat of composition, even as glazed sugar cakes often unite in the oven; and the author, again, has "had his own time of it"—and no pastime either—in literating all this illiteracy, "dundering" at heaped redundancy and abridging it, and making cosmos out of chaos—in order to be informed by sundry reviewers that he is untruthful to his originals, unreliable, and that he ought to have indicated by quotation-marks wherever Maddalena ceases to speak, or where his own betterment begins!

A STORY OF THE MEDICI.

"There was a lord of the Medici, like many of his name, evil at heart in all things, even to going about to find wickedness when it did not come to him, a man whose sin began where

other men's left off, as became his race and blood, *come vengono di stirpe*. For, while most bad men sacrifice strangers, he found victims in his own family, having murdered his wife and laid his hand on his own daughter.

"For in his rage he stabbed or struck this daughter Olympia with his sword, and then, believing he had slain her, called his jailer and bade him keep the murder a secret and bury the body. But this man and his wife, finding that the young lady still breathed, restored her to life, treated her with all love and kindness, and gave her a chamber where she lived unknown to the world.

"But before long the Signore di Medici felt remorse for the murder of his daughter, and suffered by night and day. Now, among his other crimes, he had despoiled many Florentines of their estates, and those whom he had not slain he kept imprisoned in his palace. Among these was a young gentleman named Giannoro, remarkable for his personal attractions, accomplishments, and strength of body and mind, a man to find a way where there was one, and to make it where there was not. Nor did he ever despair, for he was not one to believe that God is dead because he could get no dinner.

"Now the Signore di Medici, so far as he ever cared for human beings—which was not to hate them—liked this young man, and so, instead of shutting him up in a dungeon, allowed him to inhabit an upper room, where he had light and air. It befell one day that Giannoro, studying the wall of his chamber, thought he perceived in it lines as of a door, and ascertained, in fact, that there was one, which had been closed with great care, perhaps for ages. So he began to work at it, until it finally opened; and entering it, he found himself in another room corresponding to his own, and in the presence of a young lady of great beauty, and apparently of as great intelligence. Speaking to him, she said:

"'You are, I suppose, the Signore Giannoro who is, as I am told, confined in the next room. I am the daughter of the Signore di Medici; nor do I believe that there is in this world a child who has more cause to be ashamed of a father, or one so unhappy as I am. For that a parent could be viler or crueller to his family than he has been is impossible. With his own hand, for no cause, he slew my mother, with his sword he struck me down, wounded, and believing he had slain me, bade his jailer bury me in secrecy. But this man, with more mercy than my father, finding that I still lived, did all that

was possible with his wife to restore me. So they have kept me here, and treated me kindly, at the great risk of their own lives; and so I live waiting for the hour when some heavy retribution shall fall on my father, for that he will ere long be punished for his monstrous crimes I am certain.'

"The Signore Giannoro replied that he was well assured of that, since no man could escape punishment when it was in the power of two intelligent persons, who had been cruelly injured, to plan; knowing that they were in the right. For, as he said, *Dolce cosa è vendicar giusta onta*—''Tis a sweet thing to revenge a real wrong;' and though it is said:

"'Chi vuol giusta vendetta,
In Dio sólo la metta'—

"'He who would a vengeance take,
God should his avenger make'—

yet that, where there was monstrous wrong and fearful suffering on one side, it was only doing God's work to end it. So these two young people talked together all the time, of which they had all there was to a minute every day, and not only contrived to fall as deeply in love as ever couple did, but by dint of plotting and discussing—*fra loro facevano mille e mille progette*—they hit on a plan to attain their liberty and properly punish the Signore di Medici, which was worked out as follows:

"The Signore di Medici had a custom of assembling once a week, at a supper, all of his prisoners; truly not out of any desire to treat them, but because, being a man of most biting and malignant humour, and without his equal in ribaldry and sarcasm, he loved to make these poor sufferers the targets for the stinging arrows of his wit. For he was in very truth *un vile in tutti i modi, ed aveva una lingua mordace che neppure a lingua l'avrebbe arrivato nessuno*—a man infamous in every manner and mode, with such a stinging tongue that none could answer him.

"And it was on this very evil gift that Giannoro reckoned to master him, so true is it that our talents, when turned to villainy, are sure to betray us. At the next supper, when all were seated, the Signore di Medici said:

"'I dare say that you dogs all wish that some conjurer or witch would come and deliver you from your dungeons. Ah, ye poor miserable rascals! there is no such hope for you; 'twill be all *aspettar e non venire*—waiting for what will never come,

if you hope to be set free. I have sworn that ye shall live and die as prisoners, in spite of the devil. Truly I have no faith in him, nor in witches, for among you all there's never a man who can conjure his way out of prison, nor will there ever be. Call on the devil, ye poor wretches—offer your souls; none of ye can escape me.'

"'Excuse me, Signore Medici,' replied Giannoro; 'one may very well be a wizard without knowing how to escape from prison. A man may be a good merchant and yet not know how to sell elephants. There are in magic, cakes and cakes, some of wheat and some of rye. I myself am something of a sorcerer, having studied philosophy, and I can penetrate to the deepest secrets of the human heart, and read all the mysteries of remorse—yes, and give remedies for the sufferer; yet I cannot escape from my bonds. Nay, I can even make one rise from the dead, and, if the spirit wills it, bring the dead back again to life, yet I never learned how to break through stone walls. You yourself, O Signore, are very powerful and clever, yet you know best whether you can do everything, or whether you have no griefs or sorrows which you cannot quell.'

"When the Signore di Medici heard this he was indeed astonished, and said to Giannoro:

"'If thou canst tell me what it is that most afflicts me, I will give thee thy liberty on the spot.'

"'Yea; and if I were to prove that I knew such a secret,' replied Giannoro, 'my life would be taken in an instant. Woe to the weak man who lets it be known that he has learned the private affairs of great lords!'

"'Signore Giannoro,' replied the Medici, 'come with me into another room.'

"And when they were there the Signore di Medici said:

"'If thou knowest my secret, thou knowest more; and if thou canst do what thou hast declared, thou knowest well that I must spare thy life for my own sake.'

"Then Giannoro said:

"'Thou didst slay thy wife, and then didst murder thy daughter Olympia.

"'And now God holds thee in His hand over hell, ready to let thee drop, unless thou be pardoned by the dead.

"'And the hours are few, and time flies, and hell yawns for thee.

"'It were better a million times to be thy meanest prisoner

in thy deepest dungeon at this minute than to be the Lord di Medici. And small are thy chances of escape.'

"'And what chance have I?' asked the Signore di Medici.

"'If the dead consent I can make one appear even in this castle, and perhaps at once. Nay, thou needst not suspect that I shall propose to do this thing far away so as to escape on the journey. For it is to be thy terrible judgment, O Signore, and there lies before thee an awful punishment and long penance. Yet the manner and place of the apparition depend on the will of the dead, and if that be not complied with fully in every detail, then we shall both die.

"'For note this well. If thou wilt leave me to order all things without hindrance, and I do not raise the dead, then slay me forthwith. But beware of hell, O Signore, for if thou dost not see the spirit thy life will be brief.'

"Then the Signore di Medici, who had been greatly awed by Giannoro's possession of his secret, consented, and it was arranged that in an hour the former should come to the prisoner's chamber, and at a given signal evoke his daughter. Now the room was dimly lighted, and the Signore waited in anxious expectation, when, at the sign made by Giannoro, he exclaimed:

"'Olympia!'

"When lo! as it were, through the wall there came the form of his daughter, clad in white. In great awe he exclaimed:

"'Art thou my daughter?'

"'I am thy daughter, whom thou didst murder, even as thou didst slay my mother.'

"'Can I ever be forgiven for the sin?' inquired the signore.

"'Thou art condemned to hell eternal; yea, and to such punishment as few endure, for there are few so vile as thou art, or who have so greatly wearied God with crimes. Yet even now thou mayst be spared, and I may be restored from death to life; but for this thou must do penitence to the last limit of endurance. And listen to the terms, for with one grain less thou canst not escape.

"'Firstly, thou shalt set free all thy prisoners.

"'Secondly, thou shalt kneel before them all as a slave and beg their pardons, and do to the letter whatever they shall inflict on thee.

"'Thirdly, thou shalt restore to every one in this world all that thou hast ever taken from them, to the last *quattrino*.

"'Fourthly, thou shalt become a monk.

"'For I have told thee that the penance which thou art to endure shall be terrible.'

"Then the Signore di Medici was in great fear, and promised to do all that should be required.

"With little delay he called together his prisoners and said to them:

"'Until now I have been possessed by a devil; yes, a devil in earnest. Now he has been banned—*ora il diavolo sie a lontano*—and I have repented of my sins. Therefore I set you all at liberty, and I beg your forgiveness for all the evil I did you. I restore to you all your property. Now do with me what you will. I give you the fullest liberty to revenge yourselves for the great wrongs which I have done you. God forgive me! Give me in full the punishment which I deserve.

"'I will endure the worst with pleasure. Do not spare me.'

"He said this weeping.

"Then the gentlemen prisoners consulted, and said, 'The hand of God has fallen on him; let us leave him to God.'

"And they replied:

"'We are content with your repentance, and ask for no revenge. Give us our liberty and our property again. More we do not ask. May God spare you further punishment!' And there were some of them who wept.

"Then the Signore di Medici became a monk, and went into the Monastery of La Certosa; but his remorse was great, and after a few months he died. Giannoro married the Signorina Olympia, and they amply rewarded the jailer and his wife who had been so kind to her. And they lived happily and well ever after."

Of which the moral Flaxius observes:

"Note, O reader, what a marvellous ordainment it is that there should be ever and anon among the great and holy, fashionable, divine, sacred, and *à la mode* four-hundred folk of the earth, certain abominable sinners and atrocious fools—*tout comme chez nous*—just like the rest of us common folk; yea, and even worse, and in greater proportion to numbers, they having more facility to do whate'er they will. For if this were *not* the case—nay, if our Betters and Leaders were not even far more prone than we are to break the Seventh, *et cætera*, one might tremble with apprehension and terror to think of the *awful* power they would hold and the irresistible influence

which they would acquire by all setting good moral examples! For, as it is, they are worshipped as were the gods of old; and there may be too much of a good thing—even piety. For which reason, indeed—as a lofty pile of philosophers have declared—Jupiter and Venus and the rest were allowed far more frolicking—or *froh-locken*—than is allotted to mortals, lest reverence should lunacy become! *Quod erat demonstrandum!*"

THE PEBBLES OF THE ARNO

"With veiled heads and tunics girt they go,
And pebbles backwards o'er their shoulders throw,
Which stones—who would believe it?—then grew warm,
And soft, and then assumed a human form."
—OVID, *Metamorphoses*, i. 11.

"Tamen una recepit
Parva quidem, stipulis, et canna tecta palustri:
Sed pia *Baucis* anus, parilique ætate *Philemon*,
Illâ sunt annis juncti juvenilibus."
—OVID, *Metamorphoses*, viii. 15.

"Da Pirra e dal consorte foro
Le fatal pietre dopo il tergo sparte,
Onde il genere uman fu ricovrato,
Stuol duro e alle fatiche avezzo e nato."
—TASSO, *Rinaldo*, c. 9.

SOMETHING of old mythologic tradition, which has probably escaped from books and schoolboys, appears now and then in peasant tales, and in the following we have such a fragment, very quaintly mingled with fairy-lore and common sorcery. The plaintive wailing of the pebbles by moonlight is a very striking fancy. The whole is translated *verbatim:*

"Long, long ago, in the country where Florence now stands, and far about, all was a waste without inhabitants, save one small house or hut, wherein dwelt a good old couple. Of these, the husband's name was Bacco, and that of his wife Filomena, and they would have been quite contented but for one thing, that they were so lonely; for whether it was caused by war or pestilence truly I know not, but they had not a single neighbour. Perhaps they came there the first before anybody; in any way, all the land was to let for nothing, and there were no applicants for it.

"Now, it came to pass that Jesus Christ came with St. Peter into this lonely country, wherein they walked for three

days seeing nothing living, unless it were a wolf or fox now and then, till, on the third evening, they came to the cabin of Bacco, and St. Peter knocked at the door.

"When the good couple saw two strangers they were delighted, and made them welcome, treating them like friends; and Bacco, who had nothing in the world but a lamb, went out to kill it, to make a feast for his guests.

"But our Lord said to him: 'Wait a little.'

"And in that minute there happened a wonderful thing, for the lamb brought forth another, which grew immediately to the same size as its mother.

"'Take the younger,' said St. Peter. 'We will eat that.'

"'And every day henceforth the mother shall bring forth a lamb, which will also grow in two seconds to full size.'

"Then Filomena had but one loaf of bread, but when she would cut it, what she took away grew again. And thus it was with the wine; and St. Peter said:

"'So shall it be; since ye have been hospitable, ye shall not lack meat, bread, or wine while ye live. Unto him who gives there shall be given. And if there is aught else which ye desire, speak while it is time.'

"Then Bacco said:

"'Not for myself do I ask aught. But it seems to me to be a pity that so good and fair a country as this is should be without inhabitants.'

"Then our Lord said:

"'Go thou with thy wife to the bank of the Arno and gather many pebbles, as much as ye can bear.

"'Then walk straight forward, and ye shall both cast the pebbles one by one over your shoulders, but take heed that in so doing ye do not turn your heads nor look behind, and keep repeating these words:

Invocazione alle Pietre.

"'O Pietre, grigie e dure!
Che venite dai luoghi oscuri!
Non sarete adoprati per muri,
Invece di voi case fabbricare
Avrete case da abitare
Sarete tutti uomini e donne
Con diversi, belli nomi,
Uno Adamo, una Gianna,
Uno Pietro, l'altra Anna,
Con l'aiuto delle Fate,
Alzatevi e destate!'

Invocation to the Stones.

" ' O river stones so hard and grey,
Washed here from places far away!
Built into walls ye shall not be;
You have a different destiny.
Instead of making houses, well,
Ye shall yourselves in houses dwell;
For men and women ye must be,
With different names, as all will see.
One shall be Adam, one Gianna,
One a Pietro—t'other Anna,
With fairy aid and no delay,
Rise into life! Awake, I say!'

"So they did this, and the stones became men and women, and these were the first inhabitants of the Val d'Arno and of Florence, but it was by Fiesole that this took place.

"Then the Lord changed the cabin of Bacco into a church, wherein He preached to the people; and of the shed by it He made a convent for nuns, of which Filomena became the Abbess.

"Now it is said that those stones which were not changed into men and women greatly lament their hard fate, not being content as they are. And he who will listen by night, when the moon is full and shines on them, can hear them complaining or singing as with the voices of little children, and saying, 'Is it not time for us, also, to become men and women?'

"Now there is a magic virtue in these pebbles, and when they are conjured by the proper ceremony, they may be made to speak and disclose wonderful secrets, and the manner of it is this:

"Take a pebble from the Arno, and wash it well with wine in the names of St. Peter, Bacco, and Santa Filomena, and say:

" ' Pietra! Pietra! Pietra in mano
Vi tengo come voi volete essere umana.
Ti scongiuro di parlare,
Dimmi dove é un tesoro,
Sia d'argento, sia d'oro;
E qualunque mia domanda
Ti prego di parlar al comando.'

" ' Stone, O Stone! as thou'dst be human,
Living as a man or woman,
By thy hope I conjure thee,
Give an answer unto me,

Tell me of some treasure old,
Be't of silver or of gold,
And there reveal where it is hid,
Answering truly as thou'rt bid.'

"Then the stone will answer with the voice of a little child replying to all questions; and this must be done while the full moon shines upon the stone, and only then."

"'Tis a marvellous thing to note," adds Flaxius, "how in all lands, 'mid men of every race, all seem to seek their origin in stones. Was this derived from the very natural idea that the Gods descended from the Giants, who were initially mountains or mighty rocks, or hinted by the foundation-stone whereon the House—typically Man—rests? Even the Oneida Indians have a stone which was their father—very probably the same tradition attached to that which is in the Coronation-chair, which was carried about, possibly at first from Carthage in earliest days. And last, not least, we have the Roman Church and its rock Peter—*Petrus es et super hanc petram ædificabo ecclesiam meum.*"

LA TORRE DEI RICCI OF LA VIA SANTA ELISABETTA

"The goblin who from days of yore
Hath ever watched a golden store,
Hidden with awful mystery,
And shut away by sorcery,
In some *old tower*, or buried cell,
Or fairy mound, or mossy well,
Until no more in night concealed
All to the heir shall be revealed."—C. G. L.

THE Ricci were a family in the old time in Florence, who, as their name betokens, were extremely wealthy, so that they owned several streets, palaces, and towers, the latter of which determined of itself their claim to power, wealth, and nobility. For as in Sicily the *Nuraghi*, or citadel-towers, were the necessary retreats of every one, so in all the Italian cities of the Middle Ages every head of a clan or of a large family was strictly obliged to own one or more such places of refuge.

It is pleasant to read, as the *Calendario* expresses it, of the Ricci, "that if their buildings give an idea of the vast wealth of this family, the pages of History also abound in proofs of their great virtue." Therefore it was with gratification that I learned from a legend of the people that the memory of this great and benevolent family is perpetuated as having left to Florence an immense heritage which is some day to be divided among all the dwellers therein impartially, when the city shall have attained the acme of its prosperity, or be in dire need! As is fully explained in the following admirable story, translated *verbatim:*

The Tower of the Ricci.

"This tower is at the corner of the Via Santa Elisabetta, at the beginning of the Via dei Ricci. Though it has been modernised, it may still be recognised. And all the Via Santa Elisabetta, as well as the Via dello Studio, once belonged to the family of the Ricci.

"It is said that they buried under this tower a mysterious or enchanted treasure, which is to remain there till the day shall come when there will be the greatest need of it, or when there is the most misery in Florence.

"This treasure is guarded by a Red Dwarf, who is often seen after midnight walking *in su e in giu*, up and down before the Tower dei Ricci, seeming as if he were waiting for the coming of some one, the proof whereof is that he from time to time stops some passer-by, and asks him if he has seen a noble cavalier mounted on a fine white horse.

"This dwarf is a *folletto* or goblin, and it is his duty to guard the treasure, and till it is discovered he can have no rest—*Non puole andare in pace sua.*

"The discovery of the treasure is to be made by a grand signore, who will come from afar off, riding a magnificent white horse. He will arrive at midnight on Christmas Eve, and stop before the church; dismounting, he will give the reins to the Red Dwarf to hold, and entering the Tower, will take the treasure.

"The Cavalier of the White Horse will then consign the gold to the care of the (chief of the) most ancient family in Florence; and this latter will distribute it and relieve Florence from great misery, causing much joy, inducing all to bless the name of the Ricci, who, dying, were so benevolent. And when this shall be done the Red Dwarf will have peace, and be no more seen."

What somewhat conflicts with this story is a legend to the effect that the treasure grows or diminishes with the prosperity of Florence, and that it is to be distributed when at its maximum. Political economists are of the opinion that this will never come to pass until after the abolition of the *dogana*, or city-gate taxes. It may be observed that the White Horse signifies victory, success, or prosperity, but not till after long waiting and delay.

Thus Crescentius was to come, after many years, on the White Horse, and set Rome free from tyranny. Death on the Pale Horse is the final victory over all evil. To see a white horse, suddenly, when one is in trouble, presages that the affliction will pass away, and be succeeded by joy, but not immediately. There is a vast amount of traditional lore confirming all this.

THE STORY OF THE VIA DELLA MORTE

" Oggi in figura,
E doman in sepoltura."—*Italian Proverb.*

" Thou hast deserted me and made the tomb
Thy bridal bed—and I beside your feet
Will lie and watch ye from my winding-sheet,
Thus—wide awake though dead."
—SHELLEY, *Julian and Maddalo.*

As there are in Florence the streets of Hell, Purgatory, Limbo, and the Skeleton, it may be supposed that one of Death, or a *Via della Morte*, is not wanting. It is associated with a story of Boccaccio, which is so well known, and so much like others in other lands, that I at first thought of passing it over, but as it may be expected in such a work as this, I give it place.

The Via della Morte leads from the Piazza del Duomo to the Via Calzaioli, and is beyond the Misericordia. In the year 1343, when there were fierce conflicts in Florence between the nobility and *popolani*, or populace, there was among the latter a young man named Antonio Rondinelli, who loved and was beloved by Ginevra di Almieri, of the patrician class. That her father refused his assent to such a match is in the usual dramatic course of events, and he also obliged her to marry a nobleman named Francesco Agolanti.

Then came the horrible plague of 1400, and Ginevra being attacked by it, became insensible, and was supposed to be dead. There was little delay in burial in those times, and the supposed corpse was hurried into the family vault between the cathedral and the campanile,

just below the bas-relief of Orpheus playing on a lute. The rest of the tale is told in the following verses, in which I have followed the popular prose narrative, as it is related among the people and in divers story-books:

"And then at midnight, coming to her mind,
Ginevra Agolanti saw the moon,
Which shone through a small opening overhead,
And dumb with terror, looking round her, found
That she was lying in a funeral vault,
A dweller in the silent home of Death.

Yet strength was still in body, more in mind.
After long work she burst the bandages
Wrapped all about her, and then raised the stone
Above the vault, and so escaped the tomb;
And yet, escaped, was still in cruel case,
Alone at midnight, far away from home.

She turned her steps at once unto the house,
Passed by the way which ever since that time
Is known in Florence as the Street of Death,
In memory, as 'tis said, of this event,
And knocking at the door, cried out aloud:
'I am Ginevra—open unto me!
Open in haste, or I shall die again.
Open, I say, for I am here alive.'

And then her husband, half in deadly fear,
And half in anger, answered: 'Get thee gone!
Thou art a *Strega*, or some spirit vile,
Who hast inspired the corpse or taken the form
Of her who was my wife, and now is dead!
Who die in God do not return to earth;
Therefore, thou thing of evil, get thee gone!'

And all aghast the lady went her way
Unto her father's house by San Andrea,
In the Mercato Vecchio, and there
She was repulsed again with bitter words,
And passing to the Calzaioli, sat
Upon the steps of San Bartholomew,
And meditating, 'mazed, said to herself:
'Can it be true that I am really dead?

And have I but the semblance of a form?
And is this but a memory of a mind
Wherewith I think I think as once I thought?
And am I but a phantom in the land?

One place remains for me, and only one,
Where they may think I am a living thing:
The house of Rondinelli, he who loved—
The only one who ever loved me well—
There is my last resort.' And there she went,
And knocking once again, wailed out aloud:
'I am Ginevra Agolanti—I
Have risen from the dead, yet was not dead,
And come unto thee as the dead do go
Unto a better life. Oh, let me in!
Indeed I am not dead, my own dear love!'

And Rondinelli, hearing this, replied:
'Be thou a devil or *folletto* dire,
Whoever thou mayst be, wearing that form
And speaking with that voice, I'll let thee in,
For here I ween is some strange mystery.
He who, like me, has lost all love for life
Has little cause to fear a shape of death.'
And saying this, he opened wide the door,
And took her by the hand and led her in
Unto his parents, and they heard the tale—
And from that hour she never left him more."

It is added to this narrative that the tribunals of Florence decided in this case that, as Ginevra Agolanti had been *dead* and buried, and received the last rites of the Church, and as her husband had refused to receive her, her marriage was annulled, and she was effectively divorced. Of which decision (according to Boccaccio) she availed herself to marry Rondinelli.

The reader will probably recall that Shelley left an unfinished poem on this subject in his fragment of *Ginevra* (Poems of 1821).

This tale has always been beloved by the people in Florence, and one of the most popular halfpenny or *soldo*

works, to be found at many a corner, is the *Storia di Ginevra degli Almieri che fu Seppellita per Morta in Firenze.* It is a pamphlet (*Tipographia*, Adriano Salani, Via le Militare, No. 24, 1893), and poem of 488 lines, ending with the words:

"Visser cosi gran tempo in festa e gloria
E con questo qui termina l'istoria."

"And so they lived long time in joy and glory,
And so with that here I do end my story."

"Wherein I note," the learned Flaxius adds, "that as the tenderest tale of truest love or maddest tragedy e'er played by man cannot be unto Nature accurate unless some gleam of *humour* lie therein—as rabbits play in churchyards o'er the dead—so in this tale Ginevra degli Almieri was only allowed to marry Signore Rondinelli on the ground that she *had really died*, and was *de facto*, and of course, extinct, because she had received the last rites of the Church, which, of course, made her as dead as a doornail, or a doorpost, or a drowned mouse, or a dried herring, or any other popular synonym for mortality. Wherein she was in the same predicament as our noble friend Sir Charles Coldstream, who found himself dead in the eye of the law, although he was in reality alive and kicking—yea, and not only kicking, but hammering the blacksmith, Mr. Firebrace, *ad libitum.* That is, Ginevra was corpsed according to logic ecclesiastical: the funeral service is only read over the dead—that service had been read over Ginevra; therefore she had died. Which kind of reasoning, I regret to say, is found to this day in full bloom in English law. John Doe, perfectly innocent, is by circumstantial evidence found guilty of murder; but he cannot be set at liberty except by special grace and a *pardon* from Her Majesty—for a crime which he never committed, but of which he ever remains adjudged guilty by the very pardon itself!

"Great is the wisdom with which mankind is governed."

THE DEAD RETURNED TO LIFE

A LEGEND OF THE VIA DEGLI ARCHIBUSIERI, OR THE STREET OF THE CROSSBOW-MEN, IN FLORENCE

> "They found Ginevra dead! if it be death
> To lie without motion or pulse or breath,
> With waxen cheeks, and limbs cold, stiff, and white,
> And open eyes, whose fixed and glassy light
> Mocked at the speculation they had owned;
> If it be death when there is felt around
> A smell of clay, a pale and icy glare,
> And silence."
>
> —*Ginevra, a Fragment, by* P. B. SHELLEY.

THE tale of Ginevra and the Street of Death suggested to Maddalena that there was another legend of a revival not unlike it or of the same kind, which she, after due inquiry, gave as follows:—

"There was once a rich gentleman, who lived in a house in the Via degli Archibusieri. And at one time there appeared, and came to dwell in his family, a young lady who seemed to be some relation, but of whom nothing was said, and she herself seemed to do all in her power to escape observation or remark, which was not easy, since her beauty was such as to attract notice anywhere. Yet she was withal extremely pale, and looked like one who had suffered long and terribly.

"One evening there came to supper in the family a gentleman, who looked frequently and very earnestly at the young lady, as if with awe, but said nothing. And when the meal was at an end, the lady, having an opportunity to speak to the visitor, said:

"'It seems to me, sir, that you must know me, from the air of astonishment with which you looked at me.'

"'Truly, I may well say that I know you; nor is it a wonder

that I am astonished, since, when I last saw you, you were lying dead in your coffin in Milan.'

"'I beg you to guard my secret well,' replied the lady; 'for it is of life and death to me. And I will tell the tale to you in full.

"'When my father died he left a very large fortune, making an uncle, who was almost my last living relation, my guardian. This uncle has a son, and both are infamously wicked men, though they concealed the evilness of their souls, by hypocrisy, from my father.

"'His son, my cousin, was, however, more open and brutal in his vice. It was agreed between the pair that I must marry this cousin, or else, as accident revealed to me, be put to death by poison. And this would have been my ultimate fate in any case, for their whole object was to get my property.

"'I suffered untold misery from the tyranny of the father and the love-making of my cousin, which was the more intolerable because I was secretly betrothed to a gentleman worthy all regard and respect. And nothing could be done, because my uncle is a man of such power and authority as to be above the law.

"'After one year my sufferings became intolerable, and I was at last plainly threatened with torture and death unless I yielded. Then my lover—who is the son of this gentleman in whose house we now are—arranged with me a plan of escape. My betrothed is a learned man, and he contrived, as a physician, to make himself welcome in my uncle's house; and getting into his confidence, and by pretending to be as wicked as himself, he at last brought it to pass that my uncle offered him a large sum if he would take my life by poison, to be administered as medicine.

"'My uncle fell into the trap. I pretended to be ill, and at last to die. Then my lover and doctor, who had all ready and at hand a corpse, or the semblance of one, in a coffin, put on its face a wax mask perfectly like my face, prepared with the greatest care by a distinguished artist, so that no one who beheld it doubted that it was I. And to aid in the deception, my lover cautioned all against touching me, saying that I had died of the plague and must be buried at once, whence it came to pass that only a few friends, among whom you were one, were present at the last prayer. Nor were the uncle and nephew less anxious to get me in haste out of the way, for my lover had told them that the trace of the poison

was perceptible in my wax-like complexion, which appearance is, indeed, very often the result of certain kinds of poison.

"'Meanwhile I, dressed as a page, with my face darkened and with false hair, walked boldly away with the physician, who brought me here to his uncle, a most worthy gentleman, and I have since then lived unknown in Florence. *Cosí tutti credidero che io fossi morta*—and thus it came to pass that all believed that I was dead. But in a short time I shall be of age and married, and free from further persecution. And I truly thank you, signore, for having said nothing when you recognised me.'

"And not long after, the signore learned that the lady had indeed married and recovered all her property. Nor was this all, for her husband and his friends boldly pursued the uncle and nephew in every way, making known their infamous conduct, till they fell into general contempt and disgrace; and losing their authority, they found enemies and accusations of crime springing up around them like armed men—the end thereof being that they came to the block or gallows, and the greater portion of their immense property passed to the niece whom they had sought to ruin. So it befell in the end that those who would have ruined were themselves brought to ruin, and instead of ravening—

> "'Returned like ravens from a corpse whereon
> A vulture has just feasted to the bone.'"

LEGENDS OF THE FOUNTAIN OF THE CHIASSO DEL BUCO

"Non tamen Ægeriæ luctus aliena lavare,
Damna valent, montis que jacens radicibus imis,
Liquitur in lacrimas, donec pietate dolentis
Mota soror Phœbi gelidum de corpore fontem
Fecit, et æternas actus tenuavit in undas."
—*Egeria changed to a Fountain.*
OVID, *Metam.*, XV. 10.

THE *Chiasso del Buco*, or Lane of the Hole, as it may be translated, is a very fit term (*nomen et omen*) for the place as it at present exists, being, in fact, a very small slum of repulsive appearance, not unlike a hole, which is entered by a very narrow passage in the Via Vaccherecia, or just between the Piazza della Signoria and the Via Por San Maria, while the other end opens in the Via Lambertesca. "It was so called from the family Del Buco, which was greatly honoured in Florence." A ray of its good report appears in the ensuing story of—

THE STONE BY THE FOUNTAIN IN THE CHIASSO DEL BUCO.

"There was, in ancient times, in Florence a gentleman who was not only wealthy and wise, but also winsome in his ways and attractive in person, his name being the Signore Mardi, and over and above all these advantages, he had a truly good heart, which caused him to be loved by all who knew him.

"This signore was in mutual love with a young lady of good family, named Anaïsa, who had a very intimate friend named Giurguna, both being famed for beauty and accomplishment. And Anaïsa, who was as good and true as she was charming, had a very sincere love for Giurguna, which would have been sadly diminished had she known that the latter was not only a witch, but that she had fallen desperately in love with Mardio,

and was determined to win him. And the witch had two advantages, one being that she was perfectly able to play the hypocrite and not betray herself, well knowing that *Chi sa tacere è padron de gli altri*—'He who can hold his tongue will anon hold others;' and, secondly, that she could bide her time, believing that 'he who can wait will win sooner or late.' And meanwhile she studied every point, and turned over all the resources which her witchcraft gave her, till she hit on a scheme which, as we shall see, was certainly as ingenious as it was strange.

"At last the day came when Mardio was to be married to Anaïsa, and Giurguna had never before shown herself so affectionate and kind to her friend, or so deeply interested in anything as this bridal. And on the early morning of the day, she came to Anaïsa with a very beautiful ivory casket, covered with carving representing lovers and Cupids and flowers—a thing of great value—and said:

"'My darling friend, I bring thee for a wedding gift this *scatola* or box, which, however, contains something which I dare to say is of inestimable value, since I would not give thee on such an occasion anything which was not, so great is my love for thee. In it there is a mirror of such magic power that whoever looks in it will be for that day irresistibly beautiful, and secure the love of her husband beyond all fear. But to effect this, the mirror must be kept a secret from all the world, and only be looked at privately, else it will lose all its power and become like any other. But by keeping it secret and looking into it daily, you will remain young and beautiful for ever.'

"And here the witch told the truth, for whoever looked into it would indeed remain for ever young, but as a statue, for the one who did so became at once petrified into a figure of pure marble if good, or changed to a rude stone if evil.

"And then Anaïsa, wishing to look her best and charm Mardio to the utmost, just before the ceremony went into her room, locked the door, and taking out the mirror, looked into it, when she at once became a statue of pure white marble. But the glass, which was enchanted, at once fell back into the casket, which closed; and Giurguna, who was on the watch, listening, entered by a window, secured the casket, and retreated undiscovered.

"When the bridegroom and wedding-guests were assembled, there was much astonishment at the non-appearance of the

bride, until, their patience being exhausted, Mardio himself burst open the door of her room and entered. Great indeed was his amazement at finding Anaïsa in all her nuptial robes, but a white statue of marble; and as great for a long time was the wonder over this thing in Florence, it being generally believed that the lady had swallowed some potion which had turned her into stone. Then the dead and yet imperishable form being given to Mardio, he placed it in a cabinet, where he sat for hours looking at it.

"Looking at it indeed, but studying meanwhile, sometimes in books, and sometimes engaged in tracing out clues and trains of thought; for he was not only very learned in all things, but also gifted with a subtle genius, so that if he could but grasp the tip of the tail of the most slippery serpent of an idea, he was sure in the end to hold it by the neck and draw its fangs. And first of all, he learned from a book of magic that there were arts by which people could be petrified, and that there were great refinements of deceit by which those who practised such deeds concealed them. Secondly, he began to detect in Giurguna *una certa fintaggine*—a certain trace of trickery and falsehood, which revealed the nature of a witch, and following up this clue, concluded from other signs that she was truly a sorceress. And, finally, he found that the petrifaction had certainly been accomplished by means of a mirror.

"Now, when a man of genius sets himself to work, even in magic, he will advance further in a day than any woman can in a month, though she have all the trickery of the devil in her; and the end of it all was, that Mardio brought his suspicions almost to a certainty, and resolved to stick at nothing to find out the whole truth and to be revenged. At last he consulted with another witch who was his devoted friend, and confided to her all his suspicions; and she, after reflecting, said:

"'The Signorina Giurguna is certainly guilty, and I can give you the means of proving it. Here in this vial is a powerful perfume, and if a woman be a witch, and she should smell it while asleep, she must answer truthfully all questions put to her. Now do as you think best.'

"Mardio had long observed that Giurguna was willing to marry him, which fact had, indeed, guided his suspicions. Therefore he lost no time in making love to her, the end being that they were married, she never dreaming what he had in his mind. And on the wedding-night, when the bride fell asleep, he uncorked the vial, which gave out a very pungent

and peculiar perfume, and putting it to her nose, at once perceived that she was under its influence. Then he asked her:

"'Wert thou not the one who turned Anaïsa to marble?'

"'Yes,' replied Giurguna. 'I did so out of jealousy, because I was in love with thee.'

"'How didst thou do it?'

"'With a mirror,' replied the witch, still sleeping.

"'And where is this mirror?' asked Mardio.

"'It is in an ivory box, which is in my coffer.'

"Then Mardio sought in her coffer, and found the casket, and taking care not to look at the mirror himself, and with averted eyes, held it before the face of Giurguna, and said to her:

"'Awake, thou accursed witch!'

"She awoke, and seeing herself in the mirror, at once became, not a statue of marble, but a rude stone or column. And in that instant the spell was removed from Anaïsa, and she became human and living as before.

"The tale (*as it was written for me*) adds that the beautiful Anaïsa learned from this that no one should trust implicitly to people who display an excess of love for no apparent cause, and to frequently reflect on the old proverb:

> "'Se vuoi vivere e star bene,
> Prendi il mondo come viene.'
>
> "'If you would live and be free from wrong,
> Take the world as it comes along.'

"As for the petrified Giurguna, she was set up in the Chiasso del Buco, by the fountain, where the pillar may be seen to this day."

There is also a legend of a very different character, referring to this mysterious fountain, which is as follows:

Chiasso del Buco.

"In the Chiasso del Buco, which is so called from the family Del Buco which dwelt there, is a fountain by which stands a stone pillar, and there is a strange tale how they both came into this place.

"Once, in the old times, there was in the summer a terrible

want of water in Florence, and at a time when the city was besieged by an enemy. For not only was the Arno dried up, but even all the wells; nor was there any rain for weeks, so that the poor suffered terribly, and many died.

"However, there was a fountain in the courtyard of the Medici which would have given enough water for all Florence, but the Grand Duke would not give away a drop, but sold it all for five *soldi* a bucketful—*a cinque soldi la secchia.*

"One day the beautiful Signorina Angela del Buco came before the Duke, to beg him to have mercy on the people, *per pietà e misericordia*—for mercy and pity's sake.

"'I beg your Highness,' said the Signorina, 'to be more humane to the poor and give them water without a price, for many of them have no money at all.'

"The Duke Cosimo replied, laughing, 'Truly no one can say with the proverb, *Di questa acqua non voglio bere*—"Of this water I will never drink"—for everybody seems to be eager enough to get some of it. No, indeed. *Qui prende paga*—he who drinks must pay, be it for water or wine. But there is a price for it which you can easily pay. Give me yourself and I will supply the people with water.'[1]

"The young lady reddened with shame and rage at hearing such language, and walked away; but when she came to the fountain she burst into tears and said:

"'What a pity that thou art here and not elsewhere!'

"A beautiful spirit, or *fata*, rose from the water and said:

"'And why?'

"'Because the Grand Duke has no compassion on the poor, and sells this water to people who are dying of thirst, and cares not that there are little children and babes perishing in misery in all Florence. And he has made to me a vile offer—I would rather die a thousand times than accept it; and yet it were better for the people that I did so, and I will to spare their sufferings, and then die. But all this might be spared were this fountain elsewhere.'

"'Where wouldst thou place it?' said the *fata.*

"'In our Chiasso del Buco,' replied the young lady; 'and if it were there, I would give its water to every one, without money and without price.'

"'*Sia fatta!* It shall be done,' said the fairy.

[1] In the original, "Datemi la vostra verginità, ed io darò l'acqua ai popoli. E quando io apriro la tua piccola tuca (a proverbial saying) Signorina del Buco tranquillezero molti quori."

"And in the morning, when the Grand Duke awoke, his servants told him that the spring had dried up in the fountain in his court, and he raged and cursed in full measure to hear it, but, as the proverb says, 'what went away on the torrent never returns on the wind.'

"But when the signorina looked from her window she saw a great crowd of happy people all drinking from a stone fountain which had mysteriously risen in the night, and the truth was already known to them that it was owing to the prayers and benevolence of the signorina that this had been done; and they all blessed her like a saint.

"Then the Signorina Angela had a column placed close by the fountain, which is to be seen to this day; and this is the *Sasso della Fata*, or Fairy's Stone, in which the spirit still dwells.

"He or she who would have good fortune should touch this stone or column, and cast some of the water of the fountain on it and say:

"'Bellissima donna
Che stai nella Colonna,
Ti prego per favore
Fortuna e onore,
Fortuna ed amore,
A ti tutto l'onore!'

"Then one should take some of the water in a vial or bottle, and keep it in great honour, or with care, and taste of it when in need, or making a prayer for aught, because in all Italy there is not a fountain so wonderful or effective as this of the Chiasso del Buco. He or she who drinks of it with faith will have good luck while in Florence; on those who drink it without such belief it will have no effect. A vial of it carried while travelling will ensure the bearer from accidents, or render the journey prosperous and pleasant.

"And it is also said that if you take a cup of this water and make a wish, and then carefully place a pin or a needle on the surface, should it float even an instant before sinking, you will get your wish should you repeat in sincerity the invocation above given.[1]

[1] Many believe, however, that this is true of all fountains, springs, or holy wells in which a spirit or *fata* dwells; and some think that all have such fairies, but those are peculiarly beneficent who have been most sought, honoured, or gifted with offerings; even such as pins or small coins, so that the proper *scongiurazione* be reverently uttered. Therefore the public fountains in great cities are thought to have great efficacy.

"That fountains, rivers, ponds, or ditches have been transferred by supernatural power, even from distant lands, was believed in ancient times, as illustrated by the following extract from the *Abderites* of Wieland," writes Flaxius.

"'O Sir High Priest!' said Democritus, 'pray tell the stranger the legend of the frogs, and how it befell that the Holy Ditch was carried over the Ionian Sea from Lycia, which, as you know, is a tolerably long stretch for aerial transport over land and water, and which is—if one may say it—almost a greater miracle than the transformation of the Lycian peasants into frogs.'

"Which work by Wieland is to my mind and taste—such as they are—the first book of its kind (which kind, indeed, doth all rare kinds embrace) of this century. For as the highest mission in life is to annul the Philistine and defeat the Duffer, and as this book of the *Abderites* is in some wise the Gospel of this holy faith, therefore do I commend it unto the Faithful, or Enlightened, or Illuminated Cosmopolite, or *Mooskopfolite*, as German students anagrammatise the word, as a composition of marvellous consolation, and one wherein the common enemy is shown up in all his or her poor, paltry, pitiful contemptibility as in no other that is known to me. Now it hath been said that '*Relations* are the common enemies of the human race,' and truly the Philistines are so numerous, being well-nigh in every family, that to regard them as our foe, or to hope to convert them, is like the prayer of the American coloured clergyman which was offered for 'de wite element in our midst.' And yet—*Hope ever!*"

THE STORY OF EVANDRO THE FOOL AND HIS WISE UNCLE

" He who harps, however well,
Will meet a better harper;
He who sharps, though he excel,
Some day will find a sharper."

" Harper or sharper, it is all the same."
—*Gehab Dich Wohl*, ABR. A SANTA CLARA, 1729.

" IT was long, long ago, and yet when people were very much the same as they are now, that there lived a *nobile signore di campagna*, or noble country gentleman. He had an only son named Evandro, who had a kind heart and was not at all wanting in wit.

" But he was withal very fantastic and capricious, with so many strange ways and wild tricks that many thought him 'queer,' and that his bonnet was a hive of most eccentric and gigantic bees. For one might say of his ideas what the devil said when he saw all the beasts trooping out of Noah's ark—'I wonder what the devil will come next!'

" Now the old signore died, and Evandro went to Florence to remain under the care of an uncle who was of all men on earth the one most unlike this singular youth, and least likely to understand him in any way. Oil and water, fire and ice, were nothing to it.

" There are many people who are stupid as asses, and dull as the edge of a table, who think themselves wise because they do nothing notable—*gnente a far riguardare*—and who firmly believe that all which they do not understand is folly. Such was this uncle, who was a tailor, and very rich; and he had a son, who was in everything his counterpart.

" Therefore the uncle hated Evandro, and all the more because his nephew was far better-looking, more agreeable, and better educated than his son. Still, he was far from seeing that Evandro had any cleverness, and really believed him to

be a kind of fool or buffoon, and altogether good-for-nothing. So he always spoke of him with pitying contempt.

"One day it came into the head of this wealthy man, whose name was Lorenzone, to do something out of pure spite to make his nephew appear ridiculous. For the youth wanted some clothes, and the uncle gave him a suit, which was, indeed, of rich material and good quality, but of such antique and eccentric style that, as it seemed to him, any one wearing it would be ridiculed as a buffoon or fool—a suit of the time of King Olim.

"But Evandro, who had quickly learned all the mysteries of tailoring, and who had a marvellously artistic taste, at once saw his way to something successful, and with a little alteration made of the suit something very beautiful and original, for he was one of those who are born to lead fashions and not to follow them.

"So he went in this apparel to a ball, where everybody was amazed at his fine clothes, and asked him where he got them; and he replied that they were made by his uncle, to whom he gave the full credit of the fashion, saying nothing of his own work thereon.

"What was the amazement of the uncle when there came the next day at least twenty young gentlemen, all wanting suits like those of his nephew! But, being blinded by his conceit and ignorance, he only said to himself that one fool makes a score, and did as they desired, never perceiving that, so far from quizzing, he had himself been quizzed.

"It was the fashion in Florence in those days to have many festivals, with masks and all manner of madness, and during the Carnival to give a grand procession. He who rode at the head of it was mounted on the most singularly coloured horse which could be found. He was dressed in an antique garb, and bore on a lance a banner on which was painted a solemn fool.

"Then after him came a multitude representing, in comic guise, doctors, priests, artisans, soldiers, astrologers, sculptors, artists, and all kinds of people.

"Now, it occurred to the uncle that on this occasion his nephew, being given the opportunity, would be sure to do something ridiculous or disgraceful, for which he, indeed, most ardently longed, so great was his envy and hatred of the youth. So he gave him an introduction to the master of the revels, and waited to see what would come of it.

"But this gentleman, who was a congenial spirit, received Evandro joyfully, and asked him if he could suggest anything new.

"'Truly,' replied the youth, 'it seems to me that 'twould be a very good idea to put the people of every trade in a waggon each by themselves, and let them work as they are drawn along. Then the one who does the best should have a reward. The shoemaker who makes the best pair of shoes, or the tailor who makes the best coat, should receive a medal or a garland.'

"'Admirable!' replied the master. 'It shall be done.'

"Truly the uncle was as mad as a wounded wolf when he heard of this, for it was little to his taste to go riding in a cart hung with wreaths and flags, and doing such buffoon's work; but, on the other hand, he could not endure the thought that a rival should win the prize and be proclaimed king of the tailors over him.

"Then Evandro said to him:

"'Uncle, I will tell thee how to win the prize by a merry trick, beyond all doubt. Do thou first of all make at home and in secret, with great care, a very fine coat; for, of course, no one can produce any good work in a waggon. Then, while in the procession, cut out and stitch another like it, and when no one sees you, substitute the home-made one for it.

"'Then when thou shalt receive the prize—as thou certainly wilt—produce the one made in the waggon, and tell the truth, and 'twill all be regarded as a merry trick and a good Carnival jest—*come scaltrezza, come scherzo di Carnivale per ucellare gli altri*—and thou wilt keep the reward all the same.'

"So it all came to pass, and all Florence spoke of the uncle as a man of admirable wit, and he heard so much of it that he really began to believe it, and think that the credit of the jest was all his own.

"Now one would have thought that, after all this, the old tailor would have given up trying to play ill-natured tricks on Evandro, but it is in the nature of his kind to understand nothing short of a rap on the head with a club; and as he had come to believe that he was a *gran' uccellatore*, or grand master in the art of selling, he devised with his son something which should be a masterpiece of trickery.

"There was in Florence a lady of extraordinary beauty, wealth, accomplishments, and great family. Her name was the Countess Paolina, and though Evandro was neither poor nor

lowly, there was little likelihood that he would ever make her acquaintance.

"Then the uncle and his son, between them, wrote a letter purporting to be by the lady, full of love and passion, inviting the nephew to come and sup with her, and enjoining on him to keep it all a secret.

"But the precious pair forgot one thing, which was, that in such work as this Evandro had not his equal, verily not in all Italy, where humbugging and quizzing are better understood than in the rest of the round world; and he had written far too many such letters himself not to see at a glance that this bucket never held any water. So he only roared with laughter over it, and far from heeding the postscript, in which he was implored, in the name of God and all the saints, to keep it a holy secret, he read it aloud that very evening at supper to a few companions.

"Now among these was a young nobleman, who, like all people of intelligence, had a very high opinion of Evandro, knowing that he had a generous and kind heart, and it occurred to him that it would be an admirable jest to turn the tables against the one who had tried to trick him. So, going to the Countess, he told her the whole story, giving such a favourable account of the good looks, wit, and honour of Evandro that she at once said:

"'Truly, if your friend be half as pleasant as you describe, it is a great pity that he has not been among my friends long before. Therefore I pray you, Signore Vincentio, to bring him here to supper to-morrow evening.'

"Now Evandro, who suspected that the letter had been cooked by his dear uncle and cousin, went home and showed it to them, pretending great joy, but never said a word as to the invitation conveyed by the Signore Vincentio. So the tailor and his son rejoiced with exceeding great joy, saying: 'So it will come to pass that he will be hurled forth with scoffs amid numerous kicks, and be lashed away like a dog.'

"So they aided him at his toilet, and admired him greatly, telling him that he would be greatly honoured, and doubtless marry the lady, and so on. And loud were their roars of laughter after he had left.

"Truly he laughs best who laughs the last! What was their surprise at learning in the morning that Evandro had been indeed an honoured guest at the palace of the Countess Paolina! And 'twas, indeed, no great wonder, for he had

found himself among birds of a like feather, who knew him at a glance.

"'Pari con pari, disse Marcolfo al muro;
'Pari con pari sta bene e dura.'

"'Like to like,' as Marcolfo said
Unto the stones i' the wall;
'Like with like should ever wed,
It passeth over all.'

"Yea, verily; for it had come to pass that Evandro never looked better nor said so many brilliant things as on that evening. After that he was every day at the Countess's *palazzo*, whence it came that he passed into a high position. Before long he came to be of age, and inherited his paternal property; the end of it all being that nobody was astonished, and everybody was glad to learn that he was betrothed to the beautiful Countess, and finally married her.

"'The devil is in the fellow,' said the uncle. 'Nothing ever goes against him. If we had thrown him into the Arno, he'd have come out with a fish in his mouth.' And 'tis worth noting that to the end of his days Evandro was always as kind to his uncle as if he had been his best friend, as he indeed had been, but without meaning it.

"'Many whom as fools we see
Are wise enough when they so will be.'

"There was never yet a wise man who had not in him some touch of the fool."

Which last remark may be found literally in Seneca, and in some form in many writers, the Greeks going so far as *Mania g'ou pasin omoia*, and the Romans to *Insania non omnibus eadem*—meaning that we are all moony, only in a manifold or different way. Which very apparent fact the stoic Damasippus thought it worth while to copiously demonstrate. Yet the true summary of this tale lies in an Italian proverb, which declares that *Non è sempre savio chi non sa esser qualche volta pazzo:*

"He is not wise by any rule
Who cannot sometimes play the fool."

There is a passage in that extremely eccentric work, *La Zucca*, by Doni the Florentine, A.D. 1607, which bears

so closely on this tale as to suggest some common origin with it. It runs as follows:

"'Tis the fashion, not only in one city, but in all, to keep Carnival, with masquerades, balls, and other special festivals. But Florence goeth far beyond all others in her splendid triumphal displays and marvellous maskings, in the grand mastery of the art of life, teaching thereby moralities of death. And so it happened that in the year 1547, unless my memory misleadeth me, that some sage who wished to lay down laws for all mankind proposed to separate all the fools from the serious in the merry meeting, deeming that the grand procession would thus pass off more peaceably. So they had made a great tower, as it were, on a high rock, wherein they put all the fools, or, at least, those whom they deemed were such, and the pageant was arranged like this: There came first of all, on an eccentric-looking horse, a man dressed in antique garments, such as those which the Duke Borsa gave to Gonella, bearing a lance, on which was a great banner *spiegato al vento*—flying in the wind—on which was depicted a most grave and reverend fool of solemn sort. . . . And behind him came mounted doctors, poets, artisans, soldiers, astrologers, mathematicians, sculptors, alchemists, and all kinds of people in divers dresses and manifold masks. In the midst was a tower, drawn by many beasts of burden, in which were public buffoons and private fools (*matti privati*), over which there was such a yelling that it seemed as if those who were within differed but little as regards folly from those who were without. And with this there was admirable music and songs in chorus, ending with such sayings as that—

> "'The wise had put into that wondrous tower
> All whom they thought were fools; yet in the end,
> Should truth and sense prevail, even they themselves
> Must enter in the tower, and be confined;
> And that there's so much folly in the world,
> 'Tis weariness and waste of time to try
> To limit it by any work of man;
> For that all men were wise as far as they
> Desired it or appeared so to be,
> Yet Folly ever held in them its own.'

"Then the door of the tower being thrown open, all the fools were allowed to go, every one his own way, *a benefizio di natura*. And this was the end of that festival, triumph, and masquerade."

THE COLUMN OF SAN ZENOBIO

"In the Cathedral square there long had stood
An ancient elm, now withered as could be,
And by the pressure of the multitude
It chanced the coffin struck against the tree;
And at the touch a miracle was seen,
Clearly by influence of celestial powers,
For in an instant all the elm was green,
Covered with foliage and fairest flowers,
In memory of which wondrous deed divine
A column was erected as a sign."
—*Istoria e Vita di San Zenobi, Florence*, 1510.

"Nor is it unbelieved
By ruder fancy that an ancient ghost
Haunts this old trunk, reciting deeds of which
The flowery ground is conscious."—WORDSWORTH.

EVERY one who has visited the Cathedral in Florence has noticed the antique column, solemn, strange, and grey, which has stood for so many centuries between it and the Baptistery Church of St. John, and read in the guide-books that a withered tree once stood there, which revived and burgeoned when touched by the corpse of San Zenobio, or, more accurately, that "there is on the north side of the Baptistery the column of San Zenobius, a shaft of *cipollino*, or veined marble, erected in the fourteenth century to commemorate a miracle said to have taken place upon the translation of his relics—a withered trunk of a tree, which was touched by his bier, having sprouted out into leaves." The column itself is, however, of an earlier time, and probably dates from the so-called Dark Ages, when the Lamps of Architecture shone with a brilliancy compared to which those of the present day are as farthing tallow-dips competing with a first-class electric light.

"In all our wondrous march of mind,
The Arts, it seems, lag far behind."

As regards the column of San Zenobio, it may interest the reader to learn the whole story, which is thus told among the people, and which I do translate to the letter here:

La Colonna di San Zenobi.

"Before the beautiful Church of St. John, or near the gate of the Baptistery, there is a column of old marble, on which there is an iron band, and round it are decorations (*scherzi*), and small irons of forked shape, and with them a tree in leaf, also of iron.

"This tree in leaf (*albero di leccio*) once grew where the column now stands, and San Zenobio, who every evening went out to walk, always on returning rested under it, and loved it so much that he often said: 'When I shall be borne to my grave, I wish that the funeral train will stop here on the way, to rest a while.'

"After a time San Zanobio fell ill, and remained in bed during the day, but when evening came he always revived, and walked forth and rested under his tree.

"And all who saw this were amazed that a man who was so ill that he could not stand, every day at a certain hour was so well that he walked as lightly as if he had never known sickness.

"At last his hour of death drew nigh, and while the saint expired, all the room in which he lay became full of jessamines; neither walls nor furniture were visible for these flowers; the floor was a mass of them, and when trodden on they were not injured, nor did they fade. And all the bed became a mass of jessamines, and when he was to be borne to the tomb this was raised, and he was carried in it.

"When the funeral procession came to the tree the saint rose, revived, and went and sat beneath it.

"As it was midwinter the boughs were bare, but at his approach it shot forth in leaf. And the saint said:

"'Here on this spot the tree will grow no more,
Yet on this spot the tree shall ever be,
For it shall shrink, and shrinking harder grow,
Even as water shrinks when turned to ice.

And it shall turn into a tree of iron,
And where it grew a column will be raised
In memory of all these marvels done.
Place on the summit then a holy cross,
And round it let there be an iron band,
With ornaments in iron, and in the midst
This wondrous tree of iron—no longer wood.

"'And it shall come to pass when any one
Shall find that witchcraft wears away his life,
And wife or children suffer by its power,
Or that dark sin has grappled with the soul,
Feeling in deep despair that he is damned,
Then in this column he shall find a cure,
And be restored to health and happiness.'

"Thus spoke San Zenobio:

"And it came to pass as he said; the tree became a branch of iron, even as we see it now; the column was raised; all that San Zenobio had predicted was verified, and it is believed that he still walks of an evening by the column, but since that time he has never been seen by any one.

"When any people believe that they or their children are bewitched, as indeed happens at times even now—*come cene sono ancora*—they should take a branch of a tree in leaf and go to the column, and embracing it, say:

"'O beato e santo Zanobi,[1]
Per quanto tu amassi
L'albero di leccio
Che ora tie' stato levato,' &c.

"'Blest holy San Zenobio,
By the love which long ago
Thou didst bear this blessed tree,
Here I bring a branch to thee.
If, approving my endeavour,
Thou wilt grant to me a favour,
As a simple sign of love,
Make, I pray, yon circlet move;
And while kneeling at thy shrine,
May I see it shake and shine;
Make the evil ones depart
Who so long have vexed my heart,
Or whoever it may be
Who laid the evil spell on me
Whate'er it is, for all men say
Thy power can send it far away.'

[1] The name is spelt Zanobi through the MS., and is so called among the people.

"Having said this, the column should be held embraced for an hour, and then the suppliant must walk away without casting a glance behind."

History indeed informs us that this miracle of the dead tree *really* took place, not while the saint was on his first funeral, but during the subsequent "translation" of the body from San Lorenzo to San Salvador. But, as a friend irreverently remarks, "a few errors more or less in a saint's life are not of much consequence." The embracing the column, which is itself probably an old heathen relic from the Temple of Mars or the Baptistery, is pleasingly pagan, as is the parting injunction, that after performing the very heathen incantation one should walk away, *senza pero voltarsi mai a dietro*— "without once looking behind you," exactly as prescribed by Virgil and Theocritus after concluding a similar ceremony.

There is a literally incredible number of Lives of San Zenobio, or about enough for nine cats, of which I have perused the four dating from the fourteenth century to 1557, reprinted in one volume in Florence in 1863. When I was young the miracles of the New Testament were generally accepted by the vast majority as constituting nine-tenths of its true proof or claim to be inspired, but in this respect the Lord was very far behind most saints. The Life of San Zenobio, by Tolosani, 1534, declares that raising the dead to life is the greatest miracle, as demonstrating the immortality of the soul, and that Christ and San Zenobio each performed it three times. Comment is here unnecessary. One of the saint's revivals was very remarkable. A young gentleman named Simplicio fell over a precipice in Switzerland, and was killed, with his horse, all his bones being broken. But San Zenobio was at hand, who at once enlivened the departed, so that he rose as sound as ever. One of St. Antonino's miracles is as follows: A small girl had let fall a wooden bucket into

the Arno, when the saint, by divine grace, actually recovered it for her! Truly, I have seen this very miracle worked more than once, before my very eyes, where I write, by the *renajoli* or sand-diggers of the Arno, when an oar or scoop drifted away from their barge; but then they were not saints, and the miracle was not even recorded in *La Fieramosca* or the very excellent and observant *Florence Gazette.*

It is an amusing fact, that the same author, Tolosani, who declares that San Zenobio, like Christ, raised *three* from the dead, and relates the details of each, afterwards *adds a fourth* in Chapter xviii., and then a *fifth* in Chapter xxvi. The truth is, that, beginning with three, the saint, or his biographers, went on improving in the art after his death, according to the blessed old saying, *Que l'appetit vient en mangeant*—which is the greatest miracle of all, because the most incredible and incomprehensible. All of these Lives describe the marvel of the elm-tree, but not one so prettily or simply as it is told by Maddalena. They say nothing about the saint's daily resting under the tree; of his loving it like a living thing (a very beautiful and ancient Roman idea); of his begging that the funeral procession might stop and rest by it; and, finally, there is nothing said about the jessamines, which took the place of all the furniture and carpeted the floor, and would not die. Of course, the final wonder, that the tree turned to iron, and became a remedy for witchcraft and religious despair, is omitted—such heathenish and poetic flights being far beyond the capacities of hagiologists or writers of the Lives of Saints, of whom it is a most remarkable anomaly that, while they are so utterly regardless of truth, they are so pitiably deficient in imagination or poetry. In fact, the legend as I received and have given it—for here there is not a word of mine own—is so marvellously superior, as regards antique Roman spirit (or heathenism if you will), originality and picturesqueness,

and poetic touches, to the orthodox Catholic accounts of the same as to constitute a real curiosity of folk-lore. And I trow that the reader hath noted this peculiar character in many of these tales. It is a thing passing rapidly away, and in a very few years more there will not be a person living retaining a trace of it.

Once a year in the Cathedral there is the grand exhibition of the head of San Zenobio in a silver case. When priests are present who have been remarkably good, they are rewarded by having the skull placed just over their own. "The first recognition of his body," says Luigi Strozzi, A.D. 1685, "was, according to G. Villani, January 15, 1330, and then there was bequeathed the skull set in silver."

"I trust 'twill not escape the reader's ken," writes the benevolent Flaxius, "that, broken, shattered, or granulated as it is, there is to be found in these scraps of tale and verse a wondrous survival of a kind of genius which was deeply sunk or widely spread in ancient times, and of which we really find but little in most of the 'folk-lore' which is now recovered and recorded. Of which thing this tale is a notable example."

THE WONDERFUL CONJURATION OF BACCHUS

A LEGEND OF SAN LORENZO, IN FLORENCE

"Silenus, whom the merry maids had raised upon an ass, rode along, holding a golden goblet, which was constantly filled for him. Slowly he advanced, while behind whirled in mad eddies the reckless troop of vine-clad revellers. You, reader, who are well educated and are familiar with descriptions of Bacchanalian orgies or festivals of Dyonisius, would not have been astonished at this. At the utmost, you would only feel a slightly licentious thrill at seeing this assembly of delightful phantoms risen from their sarcophagi to again renew their ancient and festive rights . . . all rioting, revelling, hurrahing, *Evöe Bacche!*"—*The Gods in Exile*, H. HEINE.

IN the following narration, the *story* is strictly as I received it—the smoothing it somewhat into shape and the omitting a little needless verbosity are mine own, albeit I have injured my reputation for accuracy far beyond justice to myself by such admissions. If an author licks a clumsily-written, incoherent, distorted tale into shape, he is accused of "taking liberties," and if he prints it *verbatim*, nobody will read it, and all regard him as *non compos*. And I am in agreement here with the Protestant clergyman who, when confronted with the Papal "*non possumus*" replied, "Thou meanest "*non compos-sumus*." But the *poetry* is all given word for word as it is in the original, and it is the best of the whole.

"It happened once, and it was long ago, when strange things were in the land, that the monks of the Cloister of San Lorenzo held a meeting wherein there was to be solemn consultation with many nuns, abbesses, or holy lady superiors of divers convents.

"There was a certain Padre Geronimo, unto whom a marvellous thing happened; for, as he was hastening along to this meeting by the Via Frettolosa, he stumbled over a little old book or ancient manuscript, which he picked up and put in his pocket, and hurried to the *capitolo.*

"Now the proceedings were, to say the least, extremely prosy, long-winded, dull, wearisome, 'poky,' and slow, especially to Frate Geronimo, who was indeed a holy man, but especially in finishing off a whole bottle of wine, or in making a jest out of whole cloth—which is when it is as broad as it is long—wherein he was wholly without an equal.

"It befell that there sat by Brother Geronimo a very devout, yet withal plump and pretty young Badessa, or abbess, in whose eyes there beamed from time to time sundry sparks of the light of a world of a very worldly nature. And as the proceedings became more and more intolerably stupid, the abbess looked with a pitying smile at Friar Geronimo, who was remarkably good-looking, albeit of the broad-shouldered, jolly, Herculean type of beauty; to which he replied by closing both eyes and then opening them, shrugging his shoulders, or with a very unclerical wink, which provoked a shake of the head and a remonstrance with the forefinger, but accompanied by a smile!

"But even this telegraphing had to be very sparingly indulged in; and at last Friar Geronimo bethought him of his little book, and drawing it from his pocket, began to read therein.

"Now this little work was one of sorcery and magic, but all of a jolly kind, full of merry deviltry, such audacious tricks as are used by wizard jugglers—*barzellette da far ridere*—running more on goblin games and quaint devices than on dismal evocations of demons.

"As Brother Geronimo read this book of gramarye, the pretty abbess, being a woman and full of curiosity, overlooked and read after him. . . .

"And it was a peculiarity of the friar that he could not read without moving his lips and pronouncing the syllables—in fact, perusing aloud—as we often behold in peasants and children who have not quite got over their early lessons, *alta voce.*

"Therefore the good friar read aloud a conjuration, the effect of which was to make, after a few seconds, *horns* to grow on the heads of all the men in the assembly.

"It also caused their ears to shoot forth like those of fauns or jackasses, according to their temperaments. The asses' ears were in a majority.

"And it made the hair of the nuns and abbesses or superioresses grow forth luxuriantly.

"Likewise, it improved the good looks of the assembly to an extraordinary degree—saving the horns and ears. Withered old abbots became rosy, plump, and handsome fellows; thin ascetics lusty as *facchini* or porters; while the eyes of all grew large and startling, wild or languishing. It was a wondrous change for all, indeed!

"But as I said, it took a minute for all this metamorphosis, which was occupied by the pretty abbess, who also read or murmured aloud, like Geronimo, the following spell:

"'All ye who hear my voice,
Be merry and rejoice!
Laugh and shout as in a revel!
All be merry, raise the devil;
All be jolly, la, la, la,
With ho! ho! ho! and ha! ha! ha!'

"Whereupon all present obeyed the instructions to the letter. They began to laugh and dance, and with one accord burst into a mad, irregular song:

"'Bacco! Bacco! Bacco!
Padre dei Farraini[1] e dei Folletti!
Dio del vino divino!
Che porti sempre nella mano la pina,
Fate le belle corne crescere,
Sulle teste di tutti qui i presenti!
Fate le orecchie lunge,
Come le orecchie degli asini!
Fate di noi Baccanti,
Tutto in tuo onore,
Bacco! Evviva Bacco!'

Translation.

"'Bacchus, Bacchus, Bacchus, hear!
Father of fairies and goblins queer,
God of the wine divine
Which trickles from the vine,
Who bear'st the pine-cone in thy hand,
Great lord adored in every land!
Make the merry horns appear
On the heads of all assembled here;

[1] *Farraini;* i.e., *Farfarelli*, demons. Compare with *Farea*, a kind of serpent.

Make their ears like asses' grow,
Make us all Bacchanti. Ho!
In thy honour let it be
Bacchus, O Bacchus, *Evöe!*'

"The abbess, as if inspired, read on at the top of her voice; and all the dancers sang to a wild music which came from—the devil knows where:

"'Cantiamo! Danziamo!
Balliamo! Balziamo!
L'un sopra l'altro saltiamo!
E il diavolo facciamo!
Nel sacco il dolòr mettiamo!
Bacco! Bacco! Bacco!
Tutto in tuo onore!
Quando Bacco trionfa
Il dolore fugge via.

Buon amore e buon vino
Mi scalda il mio cammino,
Beviamo il buon vino
Lascia andar l'acqua al mulino!
Il vino ha il sapore,
La bella donna ha il colore,
Facciamo tutti l'amore!
Uomo chi non ama vino,
Non vale un quattrino:
Bacco! Bacco! Bacco!
Evviva! Evviva il dio!
Con gioia faremmo il diavolo!
Mettiamo il dolor in sacco
Bacco! Bacco! Evviva Bacco!'

Translation.

"'Let's be merry! Let us dance,
Hop and skip, and whoop and prance!
O'er one another jump and revel
Till we raise the very devil!
Away with sorrow and despair,
Follow us no more, dull care!
Let no grim blue devils track us
While we worship jolly Bacchus!
When he triumphs all is gay,
And affliction flies away,
Love and laughter, jest and song,
All make light the way so long;
Drink good wine and take your fill!
Let the water turn the mill!
Wine is rosy that is true,
Pretty girls are rosy too;
Let us all make love and true.
He who loves not girls and wine
Is a fool and superfine.

Bacchus! Bacchus! holy Bacchus!
Let no sorry fear attack us!
Bacchus! Bacchus! aid the revel!
Let us raise the very devil!
Send all care and grief away,
Bacchus! O Bacchus! *Evöe!*'

"And the merriment grew wilder; goblins came dancing in, bearing great flasks of wine, with wreaths of roses and much ivy; the revellers cast away their gowns and stoles and clad themselves with garlands—*se le misero in capo e sene formarono delle cinture*—crowning and girdling themselves with leaves; laughing, dancing, and shouting more wildly every minute.

"The Bishop became a mighty—yea, a magnificent man, with curling locks, drinking lustily from a tremendous vase of wine, while the arms of a beautiful abbess encircled his neck.

"His *chiérico*, or attendant, who was short and plump, grew ever plumper and jollier, crying aloud, '*Io sono il Silenzio!*' And there came in an ass all garlanded with flowers, and the *chiérico*, Silenzio, mounted the ass, supported by wild and merry girls. And so he rode round the hall, following the Bishop; and after him came the rest in a revelling procession, embracing, kissing, making love, drinking, dancing, shouting—*facendo il diavolo e peggio!*—and singing:

"'Evviva Bacco, ha Bacco si,
Da Martedí a Lunedí!'

"'Hurrah for Bacchus, that is right,
From Sunday morn till Saturday night!'

"So they kept it up all day and night, and none could enter the hall or leave it, for the doors seemed to be changed to a wall. But at last the brave Geronimo and the jolly abbess—who had not lost their time, I assure you, in all this, nor their share of lovemaking and drinking and dancing—began to think how all this revelry which they had begun was to be brought to an end.

"So, putting their heads together, they studied the book, and found the counter-spell to set all right again.

"And when Geronimo read it a change came over all and everything; 'twas like the waking from a wondrous dream. All were silent in an instant—the horns and long ears vanished—gone were the garlands, ivy, roses, vines—yea, even the donkey faded into air.

"Yes, at the instant they all forgot everything—what they had seen, and what they had been, and how they had behaved. All that they knew was, that they were awfully tired of a long day's hard work, and so went home to sleep.

"All forgotten save by Geronimo and the abbess, who, having become wizard and witch, laughed over it, and kept the secret well!"

Singular as it may seem—for the story as I have told it probably seems to every reader a piece of modern manufacture—this tale is widely spread, and the embroidery which I have added to it has been very slight, or not nearly so much as Heine gave to the same when treating of Bacchus in his *Gods in Exile*. It is told as follows in a German work (*Hexen und Zauber-Advocat*) of 1705:

"Herr Detleff von Ahlefeld, formerly Danish Ambassador, relates in his Memoirs that a book on magic, left in a room by travellers . . . . was found by children, who took it with them to the Jesuit school. And opening the book, they found what charm must be uttered and what characters inscribed to make horns grow on the heads of those present; after which followed a spell to inspire laughter, dancing, and shouting; which being read, horns sprouted on the head of the Jesuit and of all the children, and they, joining hands, danced madly round in a ring with great noise and exulting—*mit grossen Gepolter und Jubel-Geschrey*—leaping over tables and benches; which attracted the attention of the Jesuit, who was teaching in the next room, who, on entering, was not a little amazed at the strange sight before him. . . . But looking about, he found the book, and having, by sharp threats, drawn the truth from the children, he examined it, and found a counter-charm or antidote, which, when read, removed the horns and restored quiet. And then the book was burned *in collegio*."

Other legends give us the souvenirs of Bacchanalia, as, for instance, the procession in which Venus restores the ring to a youth, and the story of the Bacchanals and Bacchus, which still haunt Florence. In fact, there is

very little indeed in all here given which is not found in other traditions.

It is worth noting that many writers on *occulta*, even to the seventeenth century, believe that common jugglers and mountebanks, or legerdemainists, executed their marvellous tricks by the aid of sorcery and the devil. This was not, however, regarded as quite so bad as witchcraft.

"Truly," adds our heathen Flaxius, "there is something touching in the manner in which chroniclers and tellers of old tales recall these little memories of jolly heathen gambollings, rollicking and frolicking, revels, dances, rompings, love-makings, kiss-in-the-rings, and similar jolly, harmless didoes, as if they who were in them had raised the very devil of Iniquity himself, and, like Moses, broken all the commandments at once, when, *pardy*, they were rather acting piously and doing their duty—if innocent enjoyment be such, and a stimulus to honest labour and kindly feeling. For in all this tale there is not one word said that any of the revellers smote or cursed or reviled the rest, or did them wrong in any way —which thing is so unlike all the proceedings of all Church councils that it is probably the reason why the Bacchic revel was recorded as unholy."

> " If anything our senses please,
> Be sure that thing cannot be right :
> Yea, there is sin in toasted cheese,
> If eaten with an appetite."

LEGEND OF LA VIA CONDOTTA, THE MUSICAL STATUE

"That marble shape then seemed to quiver,
And its fair limbs to float in motion,
Like weeds unfolding in the ocean;
And its lips moved."

—SHELLEY, *Marianne's Dream.*

"Wondrous music men may hear,
Most entrancing to the ear,
From old statues when the sun
His appointed course hath run;
And 'tis said they often raise
Voices sweet in solemn praise,
At the vanishing of light,
To the coming Queen of Night."—C. G. L.

"THERE once lived in Florence, in the Via Condotta, a gentleman who had a great love for all manner of antique and curious things, and who was also devoted to music.

"And by much reading and reflection he had come to believe that the music of ancient times must have been far better than that which we now have, because, as all the other arts were more perfect, that also must have been. (Which thing, if it be true in everything, makes it a great pity that we are not all a thousand years behind the time.)

"However, everybody did not agree with him as to this, and among these was a friend, who well understood that though two, blowing at a candle, put it out, yet that a pair putting wood on a fire make it burn the more. So between them they made the fire of controversy blaze up merrily enough. And one evening they raised it to burning heat, the friend of the antiquary affirming that he believed the music of the ancients was all rubbish, scrannel-piping and cat-calls, penny trumpets and child-rattles, while the other swore it was like the holy chorus of angels, with Santa Cecilia as first violin or *capo d'orchéstra.*

"At last the advocate of modern music declared he would bet a hundred crowns that he was in the right, and his friend accepted the wager. Now, truly, this seems very much like laying a bet that there is another world, or ghosts; but the antiquary was equal to the occasion, declaring that he knew a wise magician who by his art could settle the question.

"Then going to the sorcerer, who dwelt near by Santa Croce, he told him all, saying that he, the *magus*, might keep the hundred crowns, and welcome, if it could only be proved that the music of the olden time was superior to that of these our days.

"'"Tis a difficult thing to prove,' replied the wizard—'*difficile ma non impossibile*—but though 'tis hard, 'tis not impossible; and thou art in the right—*per Bacco!*—the ancient music truly was the best.

"'*Ebbene, io ho il vostro affare*—Well, I see my way to it!' he cried after a short reflection. 'I know where, in a ruined temple not many miles away, there is an antique statue of a girl holding in her hand a lyre, and we will go thither this night and see what can be done.'

"So they went secretly, and at midnight the sorcerer enchanted the statue, so that it became a living woman of extraordinary beauty, who played and sang with such exquisite charm and skill that the antiquary found all he hoped for far surpassed.

"Then he took the lady to his home, and next day said to his friend:

"'Now we will settle that wager of a hundred crowns, and I care not if thou wilt make it for a thousand. And this is what I propose: do thou bring the best female singer and musician, be it with the lute or harp, whom thou canst find, to perform in modern style, while I will produce another, who will do the same, *al antico modo*—in the ancient manner.'

"Now, both being distinguished men, this proposed competition or trial caused great excitement, and on the day appointed for the strife all the distinguished people of Florence, including the musicians, were present.

"Then the lady who represented modern music sang and played the harp. All were delighted, and applauded her, declaring that it was not possible for art to surpass what they had heard.

"But when she who had been the statue appeared, there was a dead silence of admiration; nor were the auditors less

silent while she sang and played, nor even for a minute after she had ceased, so spell-bound were they by the charm of her voice and the infinite depth of her skill, which was supported by the genius of the composition, as the colour of a great picture is supported by the design. But when the charm was broken, all applauded as they had never done before, declaring that the ancient music surpassed the modern as the sun in light surpasses a star.

"Now there was present another and a rival magician, who well understood the whole affair; and, whether it was for a jest or to annoy his rival, he rose and said to the singer:

"'Thou hast sung so well that it seems to me we really ought to erect a statue to thee in thy honour; and as none but thyself can be thy parallel, or honour thee as thou deservest to be, I will even make thee a votive image unto thyself, O Muse!'

"Saying this, he touched her, whereupon the beautiful singer became at once a statue as before."

This is an Italianised, and of course more graceful, version of a tale which may be found in other forms; among them a German one, thus related in that singular and rare book, *The Infernal Morpheus.*

"Chrysostom (*Hom.* xxix. *in Matth.*, cap. 8) hath told us that when the dead speak, it is not the voice of the departed whom we hear, but that of a devil. Tertullian, *De Anim.*, cap. 57: The speeches of souls are the delusions of devilish spirits who hide themselves under the forms of the dead. On which consult Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, Lib. x. cap. 2, and of this I will tell thee a tale:

"In Bononia a certain sorcerer once brought it to pass that he made the soul of a certain maiden who was a marvellous performer on the cithar (guitar or cithern), and who had died, enter the body of another, recently deceased; and this she animated, playing and singing, and going to festivals, as she had done of old. But there came, probably at the instigation of the devil, who had grown tired of serving, another *Necromanticus*, who called away the soul; whereupon, the life being gone, the body fell dead as before, and so the deceit of the devil was discovered and made apparent. Consult on this Caspar Peucer, *De Divinatione*, cap. 1, p. 14, and Godelmann, *Tractatus de Magia*, Lib. i. cap. 4, *de Aecromantia.*"

To which our gentle Flaxius softly adds:

"Here we have the common old-fashioned belief that everything magical or marvellous, not ecclesiastical, must needs be 'devil, devil, devil—*toujours le diable*'—with stinks and wickedness; which thing, being the foulest, falsest, and worst in the whole bag of priestly tricks, was thankfully received as a rich legacy by Luther and the Reformers, and made (if possible) by them an even greater source of cruelty and oppression. Truly, if they had been one half as anxious to shake off the yoke of the devil as they were that of the Pope, their Reformation had been of double value.

"For, as the perfection of good self-government does not consist entirely in getting rid of a tyrant, or even in guillotining aristocrats and confiscating their property, so the acme of morals and humanity was not *quite* reached by cutting loose from the corrupt old beldame of Babylon, albeit every history of the Reformation and most preachers thereunto teach us that same—as if the world had needed nothing more!"

THE DREAM OF THE EGG

A LEGEND OF THE TORRE DEL UOVO, IN THE VIA DI SANTO SPIRITO

"Divinatrices, operatrices vel sagæ, cognoscunt secreta, furta, deperdita, et thesauros quæ hominum cognitionem fugiunt."—*De Confessionibus Maleficorum et Sagarum, Auctore* PETRO BINSFELDIO, A.D. 1596.

"For a dream, like the shadow, doth show the *objectum*, or solid body or reality, albeit I may not clearly see all the lineaments, yet from it we may come to a fact."—*Höllischer Morpheus*, by P. GOLDSCHMIDT, 1704.

TRULY an egg seems to be a simple thing enough, with as few mysteries or moral lessons in it as in anything in the world, and yet I dare say one could fill a book the size of a quart measure with them, and have a pint left over. Thus it is said that "no one can cook an egg in cold water," and yet, simple as I am, I myself have seen it done; and the way it was done was this. Lay the egg in a pipkin, cover it with water and quicklime, and you will soon find it boiled. But what would you who do not know the trick, say to cooking one by holding it in your hand? Truly, it was by betting on this that the Signore Giomo di Valdarno won a horse, and a saddle of ivory and silver. *E cosí:* Take an egg, break a very little hole at the end so as to leave a flap of the shell like the door of a tarantula's nest, or a lid; pour out a little of the white, and put in its place some spirit or strong brandy. Then close the flap, glue paper over it, and hold the egg in your hand. Then the spirit will soon become so warm that it will cook the egg. Come now, if you did not know it, you have learned something whereby you may earn a penny when in want!

And the learned Francesco Petrarcha, who was called truth itself, he being a man whom no one asked to swear to aught—his word being deemed better than any other man's oath—hath left it on record as a truth in the "Annals of Celebrated Eggs," that when the Roman Empress Livia was carrying a treasure in her purse—that is to say, was two in one, the other being the unborn Tiberius—she, wishing to know whether the infant would be male or female, carried an egg in her bosom until it hatched, and proved to be a cock; whereupon she said, "Now do I see that I shall bear a boy." Which she indeed did, more's the pity, for her son turned out to be what our peasants call *un uovo cattivo*, or bad egg; indeed, it having been said of him that he stunk of vice even in a stinking age. But as regards the Empress, it seems to me that she knew less about the holy mysteries and sublime secrets of eggs than does many a contadina or peasant girl, since any one of them will tell you at a glance whether this *frutta di gallina*, or hen-fruit, will be male or female. For when it contains a cock in embryo—or cocklet—'tis somewhat longer, and hath at the lesser end a certain roughness, and is withal often somewhat larger than those which contain the hen-wives.

Which story recalls, in a way, the celebrated egg of Columbus,[1] who, once being asked how it was that he should have got the idea that there was an unknown world beyond the wailing waves, when wiser men than he knew naught of it, took an egg and asked all the learned present if they could make it stand on end. Which they declared was impossible; whereupon this Columbus—who, as a dove, knew something about eggs—simply broke one end and stood it up thereon. Yet long before this happened there was an Italian proverb, "*Rizzar l'uovo di Pippo su un piano*," meaning to do a difficult thing, or achieve it by tact and skill.

[1] Alluded to in the first volume of these Legends, p. 94 (note).

For an egg can be made to stand on end without breaking it at all, as I myself have proved by simply balancing it with great care till it is *in equilibrio*, and this on a marble table, which you can all try for yourselves.

Now, ye have all read how the English Gulliver found, in a strange land of small people, that there were two great political factions, one of whom broke their eggs at the point, and the other at the butt; whence they were termed Big-Endians and Little-Endians. Which idea came from this, that, firstly, the Jews made it a religious duty to break an egg at the smaller end, because it is there that a drop like blood—which is the embryo of the fowl's heart—is often found; in which case they did not eat it. But the Latins always broke the bigger end, for some great reason equally wise, which is discussed by four learned writers not worth mentioning; while the Germans, as Prætorius explains, began by crushing the *side*. And this author tells us that there were in his time, or in the seventeenth century, nine kinds of ill-luck caused by eating eggs carelessly in divers ways.

Unto which I could add many pages, but for the present I will conclude by a tale which treats of the mystical and true, or occult, meaning of the yellow and the white in an egg, which narrative is as follows, *verbatim:*

La Signora del Uovo.

"There was once, long, long ago, a lady who was most unlady-like in being dishonest and deceitful; and this dame dwelt in the old tower in La Via di Santo Spirito in Florence.

"Now, she dreamed one night that she saw an egg, and this made such a strange impression on her that the next day she went to a witch and asked her what it meant.

"To which the sorceress replied:

"'The egg means a great treasure which you may find, but only by my aid; and if you do so, you must give me one half of it. I will make a spell by means of which you will again dream to-night of the place or house wherein it is, and on the third night the exact spot where it hides will be revealed.'

"So the lady promised that, in case of success, she would truly divide the treasure with the witch.

"And on the second night she indeed dreamed that treasure was somewhere in the place where she dwelt, which was called the Torre del Uovo, or Egg Tower; and on the third night that it was under a certain slab in a cellar, where she truly found it. It consisted of ten thousand crowns in gold and five hundred in silver, so that, by weight alone, one half of it was gold and the other silver.

"Then the lady said to herself, 'I will indeed give the witch *the silver half*, and keep the other for myself.'

"So she took the silver to the witch, who, after looking at it, said with a stern air:

"'*O che siei senza vergogna!*—Oh, how shameless art thou and dishonest to try to cheat me thus!

"'Thou didst dream of an egg, which means a treasure in equal parts of gold and silver. The yellow of an egg means gold, and the white, silver. And I meant half the value, and not one half of the weight. Thou art like the talking hen of Montecuccoli, who ate the egg before she had laid it:

"'Come la gallina di Montecuccoli,
Mangiava l'uovo prima di farlo.'

"'If thou dost not give me half of the gold before three days are past thou shalt die, and I will take the whole.'

"The lady returned to her home, and at once found herself very ill. She grew worse and worse. When she believed that she was dying, she sent for the witch and gave her half the gold, and then the sorceress cured her. *E così la Signora guariva.*

"Of all which it may be said:

"'He who the devil would deceive
Must rise full early, we may believe;'
And he who would cheat a master-cheat
Will in the end be surely beat.'

"Which is all true, as sure as eggs are eggs, and not chickens."

The same tale is told, very briefly, in that curious collection of quaint essays and traditions, or folk-lore, the *Wahre und eigentliche Entdeckung von der Zauberey*,

by Jacob, the Lord of Lichtenberg, but generally known as the *Theurgia* of Wolfgang Hildebrand, its ostensible editor, 1704—a work discussing all manner of popular mysteries, such as sorcery, witchcraft, house-goblins, werewolves, the incubus, fiery men, and the wild-hunt, abundantly illustrated with ancient erudition, and, better still, with modern instances. According to it, the woman who had dreamed of the egg found a silver can full of gold-pieces, and only offered to the witch the lid of the beaker. To which the witch replied: "Thou only givest me a part of the *white* of the egg—why dost thou deny me my share of the yolk?" On which the wise Wolfgang remarked: "Behold how shrewdly Satan sees things, and how the *Huhre* knew of the gold in the can as if she had seen it." To which, indeed, one might reply that the lid of a silver tankard might easily cause a clever woman to guess the rest, even as the author conjectured from the woman's being a witch, that she was also a "sociable evil." For the lid of a tankard implies a tankard, or "more where that came from," and on that hint she spoke.

LEGEND OF LA VIA DEI SASSETTI, OR THE CORNER OF THE FOUR DEVILS

"Cito improborum læta ad perniciem cadunt. Which being Englished means:

'The joys of wicked persons tend
To their own ruin in the end.'"

—*The Maxims of Seneca.*

"And verily, how deplorable is the condition of that man who is forced to sigh in agonised expectancy of the loss or gain of fortune on a *vilissima carta*—a contemptibly vile card!"—*The Moral which may be drawn from a Game of Cards, by* GIOVANNI FRANCESCO LOREDANO, *a Venetian Noble, Venice*, 1677.

"O hominem nequam, qui non dubitaret alea ludere!"—CICERO.

HAD I received this and the following legend before I wrote that of "The Devil of the Mercato Vecchio," I should have included the three in a single chapter, as they all refer to the bronze *Diavolino* of Giovanni di Bologna. Both are literally translated:

"There was once in Florence a great family, of which the mother and only daughter, whose name was Lucia, were indeed as good as saints or angels, and loved by all.

"But just as they were good, the father and three brothers of Lucia were utterly evil in every way, men whose infamy began where that of the worst end, hating all that was good, souls damned while in the body, and the body accursed.

"And as they found their greatest pleasure in tormenting all living things, they tormented and grieved in every way their mother and sister.

"Truly they spared no one, for they were always in a rage if the sun went down on a day during which they had not murdered or put on the rack some human being, or goaded some poor wretch to madness. *Erano maledizione continue*—they were living curses.

"Lucia, however, became betrothed in spite of them to a young nobleman of suitable rank and condition. Whereupon the father and three brothers began to slander and abuse him to her, swearing that they would kill him, no matter how, if steel or poison could be found in Florence.

"But one day they said to her in a treacherous way, which Lucia much distrusted:

"'We have thought better of this betrothal of yours, and think it better to be good friends with your beloved. Therefore we have invited him here to supper this evening.'

"Now they had with great art prepared a figure exactly like that of her betrothed, with garments such as he wore, and a face of wax which was a perfect likeness, but like that of a dead man, and pale.

"And when Lucia entered they mockingly led her up to it, with courtesies, and bursting into roars of laughter, cried:

"'*Ecco!* there he is, as dead as a stone. We have poisoned him at last. Oh, touch his face and see how cold it is! He will never speak another word. Dead without a priest.'

"And Lucia did indeed touch and kiss the face, and never noticed that it was wax; at which the father and brothers roared again with laughter, and sat down at the table and began to carouse and sing the burial-service, with many ribald words; while Lucia, in horror and agony, fled with her mother to their chamber, where the poor souls prayed to God with all their hearts, for it seemed to them as if misery could go no further.

"And while thus praying and weeping there appeared before them an old man of very venerable aspect, whom they knew must be a saint, between two angels, and he said to them:

"'Rise at once and leave this infamous house, nor return to it till it shall have been purified by the fire of punishment. Go to the house which is opposite and look from it hither.'

"They did as he bade; and when in the opposite building they saw red flames and fire fill all their own palace, and saw the forms of demons flitting in the flames, and heard the screams of the four guilty wretches, or of the father and his sons.

"But when all was over and they returned, there was no sign of any fire or burning save in a few charred or burned bones of the four who had been so cruel.

"And there came at once the betrothed of Lucia; he was to her as one risen from the dead, for no joy is so great as the

recovery of that which we thought was lost; and they were soon wedded, and lived happily.

"And the four wicked ones were changed into the four bronze devils which were once at the corner of the old palace, and of which one remained till it was torn down. This was called the *Diavolino*."

The next legend referring to the same subject is that of:

The Gambler and San Zenobio.

"There was once a man who cared for little or nothing on earth save gambling, be it with cards or dice, yet with many vices he had one virtue, which was, that whenever he won he always gave the half of his gains to the Church or to the poor.

"So one day, having won two crowns at cards, he went forth through the woods and over the hills on his way home, till he met by the roadside a poor little tottering old man, who said:

> "'Anything in charity,
> *Buon Signor*, I beg of thee;
> Though but a farthing, it would be
> Very welcome unto me.'

"To which he replied:

> "'We all by one another live,
> Therefore this I gladly give;
> *Buon pro vi faccia*, understood,
> And may it do you lots of good.'

"Saying this, he gave him a crown, with a laugh. To which he replied:

> "'Lightly won and lightly spent,
> So it was a fortune went;
> Yet, for all that, it would be hard
> If kindness met with no reward.'

"'Thou hast been generous, and I will tell thee something for thy good, O my son!

"'There is a signore who will play at dice with thee, and he will win all thy money. Then he will propose as a stake that he shall become thy servant or thou his. But he will mean eternal service in this world and for ever.

"'Beware of him, for he is a devil. Now take these dice, and when thou playest thou wilt lose all thy money. Let it go. But he who plays with them *will always win the last throw.* See that thou manage it wisely.'

"Now this old man was San Zenobio.

"And surely enough the gambler, whose name was Brondo, soon met with his devil, who proposed to play, and won all his money, and then offered to make the last stake one of service. They agreed to make the game one of fifty throws. And when the devil had lost forty-nine he said:

"'I see that I shall lose. But in that case I must return to hell, where I shall be terribly punished for a failure. Now if thou wilt keep me here on earth, I may escape, and will assuredly make thee rich. What form shall I take?'

"'*Bene*,' replied Brondo. 'But as I wish to keep thee from doing any more mischief, I order thee to become a bronze image in thy own natural form.'

"Then the devil gave to Brondo a hundred thousand crowns, saying:

"'Take this, but never play again. *Ogni bel giuoco vuol finire* —stop playing when thou hast won.'

"So the devil became the *Diavolino* of the Mercato Vecchio."

THE COUSIN

A LEGEND OF THE BORGO SANT' APOSTOLI

> " He who would wed a widow must not dally,
> But pluck the flower while the sun doth shine;
> He must not linger with a shilly-shall-I?
> But boldly say, 'Widow, thou must be mine!'"
>
> —*Old Ballad.*

"THERE was once a gentleman who married the most beautiful woman in Florence, all very great people of course, and they lived in the Borgo Sant' Apostoli. After one year the husband died, and the wife grieved and wailed over him so that the whole city talked of it. She wept, as the saying is, *a vite tagliata, a cald' occhi*—'like a cut vine'—till her eyes burned. Night and day she was in grief, crying, 'I too would gladly die, and so rejoin my darling husband, who has passed away!'

> "'O Death! why dost thou come
> To those who'd live for aye?
> O Death! why dost thou shun
> Those who would gladly die?'

"A handsome young gentleman, a cousin of the deceased husband, was *inamorato perditamente*—so far gone in love with the beautiful widow that the bucket of his heart fairly slopped over, and remembering the saying that 'a young widow is like a log on the fire, the more she weeps the more she burns in the middle' (that is to say, the more love there is in her heart), he set his wits to work to find a way whereby her love might be turned unto him.

"Now Master Ludovico—such was his name—who came from Ferrara, where the people know, as the saying is, 'where to drive a nail in the right place as well as anybody,' began to tell strange tales how dead people had, when prayed to, left writing on windows like letters in answer, and how a certain man had corresponded with St. Thomas, till he judged

that Signora Isabella, the widow, was well filled with the idea, as a bag of nuts; and, as he expected, she said that she would pray to her husband for such an epistle.

"Then Master Ludovico, who had studied the husband's handwriting, prepared a letter purporting to be by the deceased, which read thus:

"'*Cara consorte*,—My dear wife, I am now in the other world, and would be at peace and happy were it not that thou art in such terrible grief for me. But there is a remedy for this, for if thou wouldst fain be here with me, take my sword and kill thyself, and thy soul will at once rejoin me.

"'But if thou hast not resolution enough to do this, then for Heaven's sake be quiet, and stop thy wailing and leave me in peace.

"'And if thou wouldst wed again, which is the most sensible thing which thou canst do, and be perfectly happy, then marry the first man whom thou shalt meet who has just been wounded by a sword, for he is destined to cheer thy life.

"'And keep this letter a secret until that man shall have wedded thee. THY LOVING HUSBAND.'

"Now the Lady Isabella had a statue of her husband, before which she prayed every day, and Ludovico put the scroll or letter into its hand. And when she read it, it was in full faith; for she was by nature one of the kind of whom 'tis said, *Crederebbe che gli asini volassero*[1]—she would believe that asses can fly, if it were gravely told. So she waited for events, and sure enough, ere long, Ludovico entered, looking unusually handsome and interesting, with his arm in a sling.

"'I have just been having a fine time of it, *che diavolo!*' he said. 'I was attacked in the street, almost before your very door, by a rascal who whipped out his sword, and came near killing me, but I caught the point on my arm. However, he got mine in his heart.'

"Now, it may be noted, running on, that the proposal in the letter to Isabella—put so bluntly and unsentimentally—that she should either stop crying or else kill herself, had greatly checked the current of her grief; and, as is usual with such extravagant mourners, and all people given to show and excess of emotions, she was easily turned to new fancies; and having determined that she would not make a hole in herself with

[1] Asinum esse avem credere.

the sword of her late husband, she had only to consider the only alternative of wedding the first man whom she should meet who had such a wound himself.

"So, with great emotion, she bound up the wound, which was not very serious in truth, as Ludovico had inflicted it on himself with a pin, and the duel had been arranged with a friend. And then she confided to him the letter, and they were both deeply touched with the strange event, and the end thereof was that—*colla sua astuzia potiede sposare la bella vedova*—by his craft he won the beautiful widow, and wedded her. *Moral*—or im-moral:

"'Con l'arte e con inganno
Si vive mezzo l'anno,
Con inganno, e con arte
Si vive l'altra parte.'

"'By art and trickery, I fear,
Most people live for half the year;
And by trickery and art
They get along the other part.'"

This is from a sixteenth century book of jests and tales, nor have I greatly varied it in telling.

A LEGEND OF LA VIA DEI VELLUTI

THE WITCH OF THE MIRROR

"In the art of captromancy mirrors are used for magical effects. Such was the glass employed by Catherine di Medicis, in which, at an august meeting of the royal family, it was foreshown what would to each befall. *Tunc ludit et illudit dæmon*—thus the devil deceives and receives the souls of those whom he cajoles by pretending to show them the future."—*On Magical Fascination, by* JOHN C. FROMANN, 1675.

THE following tale is very correctly, though not *literally*, translated, because the original required a little editing, of which "editing," be it observed, that when a maid-servant, or peasant, *tells* a fairy-tale, it can always be re-told as given, but that if that person were to *write* it out, it would probably require re-editing too. This tale, had it been received betimes, would have been classed with that of the Mirror and Cain, vol. i. Apropos of which latter an amiable reviewer asks: "*Who can tell* how much of this last is genuine?" Marry, that can *I*—in all holy truth—for the whole is given word for word as written out for me. *Who can tell* whether the Archbishop of Canterbury was not in early life a pickpocket? or ——; but this any honest person can tell, that baseless innuendo is not creditable in criticism, and should always be regarded with suspicion.

"There once lived in Florence, in the Via dei Velluti, a lady young and beautiful, yet who was for all that a witch, who knew many strange and curious things, which she kept to herself, for truly the cleverest witches and wizards are those who are the least suspected.

"However, she had fixed her love on a certain young gentle-

man of great family, who had a friend who was, like himself, much liked by everybody. Now it befell by a strange chance that these two met suddenly one dark night in the Piazza Santa Maria Novella as they turned the corner; each, believing that the other was some enemy or assassin, drew his sword, and as they were fighting, the guards, or police, arrested them and took them to prison or to the Bargello.

"Now, owing to many disorders caused by quarrels and frequent deaths, the Council and the Duke had strictly prohibited all duelling, and condemned to axe or halter all who should be found with weapons drawn. Therefore these young gentlemen were in great peril, since no one believed their story.

"In this strait the beautiful witch, or Signorina la Maga, sent to the Duke an intelligent messenger, who said:

"'Signore Duca, these two young gentlemen swear by the sword of St. Peter, who also drew blade when he was in a passion, that they met in the dark, neither recognising the other, each mistaking the other for an assailant, which may very well have been the truth; and if so, it would be most cruel to put to death two innocent men. And the more so because there is a doubt in the case, of which the accused should always have the benefit.

"'Now there is here in Florence a lady who has the art of showing in a blessed mirror all things which have been, just as they were, and it seems to me that if her truth can be well tested in something else, it would be but just to learn from her how this duel or encounter really came to take place.'

"'*Davvéro!*' replied the Duke, 'that seems to me to be but sensible, for I have heard wondrous tales of these magic mirrors, and I can easily test the lady's power. Therefore bid her come.'

"So, on the evening appointed, the Duke assembled many ladies and gentlemen in a darkened room, awaiting the wonder. Then the signora burned incense, and common and coarse salt, and pronounced the following incantation:

"'O Fata dalle cento Stelle,
A te scongiuro,
Che in questo momento ho bisogna
Del tuo aiuto.
Da me non possa fare,
Il mio amore voglio salvare,
Dalla vendetta della Duca
Che lo vole appicare,

Fata delle cento Stelle,
Ti chiamo in mio aiuto!
Te e la Bella Marta,
Che questi due giovani voglio salvare,
Il sale nella Fata delle cento Stelle,
Si possa convertire.
L'incensa nella bella Marta,
E il comigno in tanti diavoli,
Che le porte del Bargello possino aprire,
Al mio amante e al suo compagno,
E a tutti quelli,
Che si trovano incalcerati.'

"'Fairy of the Hundred Stars,
I conjure thee,
For in this moment I have need
Of thine aid.
By myself I can do naught.
I fain would save from the vengeance of the Duke
The one whom he would hang.
Fairy of the Hundred Stars,
I call on thee for aid;
On thee and the Beautiful Marta,
That I may save these two young men.
May the salt in this instant
Change to the Fairy of the Hundred Stars,
The incense become the Beautiful Marta,
And the cummin a hundred devils,
Who may open the door of the Bargello
To my lover, and unto his friend, and unto all
Who are imprisoned.'

"While she said this, the salt and incense, or the smoke which rose from them, became two beautiful spirits, which were the Fairy of the Hundred Stars and the Beautiful Marta. Then all beheld in a great circle the Church of Santa Maria Novella, with the Piazza, and then the two young men, who, encountering blindly in the dark, drew their swords, and fought till the guards seized them, when all vanished in darkness, with the two spirits.

"And when the room was again lighted all present were awed, yet charmed, at what they had seen, and the Duke said:

"'Truly if the fairies and imps have not already set the young men free, it shall be done forthwith. Yet ere it be effected, fair lady, I would fain test the truth of thine art more closely. Canst thou show me what I myself was doing at that very hour of that night?'

"Yes, your highness; but it may be that this is a thing that others should not know.'

"'Nonsense,' replied the Duke; 'I care not if all the Court knows it; and I am sure that half of them do, who will assuredly tell the other half.'

"Then the witch darkened the room, and the Duke saw himself, as did all present, embracing a very beautiful lady.[1] At which there was a roar of laughter, in which the Duke joined.

"'But it seems to me,' said the Duke aside, *sotto voce*, to the witch, 'that while this lady bears an extraordinary likeness to my friend of that evening, still it is not exactly the same person.'

"'Speak lower, your highness,' exclaimed the witch, 'and I will tell you a secret—and the truth.

"'That lady whom you thought you had met, had on that evening another affair on hand, or other fish to fry. So she sent her twin sister in her place, thinking that you would never find it out!'

"'*Dia-volo!*' cried the Duke. 'It appears that I, thinking to eat veal, devoured chicken without knowing it.

"'I always liked the other sister best, but never dared make love to her, thinking she was such a virtue. And now I have made love to her in very deed and never knew it.

"'Ah, well! a fair exchange is no robbery. True it is what I have often heard:

> "The ways of Fate are wonderful and deep,
> Fortune to many comes while they're asleep."'"

I would have omitted this tale, were it not so interesting as containing a veritable invocation to the Fairy of the Hundred Stars, as well as to the mysterious Bella Marta, of whom much is said in my Etruscan-Roman Legends. The length of the incantation and the details of the magical ingredients used indicate that this story, in its original simplicity, was composed by witches for witches, or to teach a formula.

There is no rational cause to doubt that all which is narrated in this story might have occurred. A magic-lantern would explain it all, and the readers of the Life of Benvenuto Cellini will recall that that wise and good

[1] A letto con una bellissima signora.

and great man believed that he had seen "wonders upon wonders" in the way of devils in the Coliseum, which were all called into being by the aid of slides and lenses. Were I a juggler—or a millionaire—I would hire the Coliseum for a night to do that raising of the devils again!

"Truly, I ween," adds Flaxius, "that there would be less witchcraft in women, and also much less wickedness, if there were fewer mirrors. For it is by ogling, wooing and cooing, admiring and smiling at themselves in glasses, that so many lasses come to live in but one idea, that of their own beauty or sweet expression, and how many people in the world must needs be mashed therewith. Which idea, well and thoroughly settled in the brain of any she-Narcissus—*vel asina*—(and God wot there be many of them!)—reduces her intellect to that of an animal, as is the case with all who think more of the body than the soul. *Dunque, beviamo!*"

LA DIAVOLINA

A LEGEND OF LA VIA DEL FIORE

"And there were roses growing there
White and red like maids in bloom,
Which ever sang in the summer air
A song of sweet perfume,
For a scent is a song to him who knows
What the flower utters when it blows."—C. G. L.

In *L'Illustratore Fiorentiono, Calendario per l'anno* 1838, the following legend is briefly narrated, as matter of authentic history, and as taken from a manuscript "*della Riccardiana, segnato di* No. 2124," with the statement that the event recorded in it took place in the year 1562. To which it is added that the street was named *La Via del Fiore per memoria di tal fatto.* The points of difference between the authenticated story and the same as it is told among the people are very remarkable, and constitute, as I hope to show, the real interest of the whole. As told and written for me the latter is as follows, *verbatim:*

La Via del Fiore.

"There once dwelt in this street a woman who was called by all who knew her La Diavolina, or She-Devil, because she quarrelled day and night with everybody, men, women, and children, and the cause of all this was that she had a daughter.

"This girl was one who would have gladly been beautiful, but was naturally very ugly—so ugly that all who beheld her, *la scansevano*, shrank back with repugnance. And when the poor girl saw that others were invited to dances and

all kinds of festivities, while she was left out, and that other girls had lovers and she none, she became utterly miserable, and said to her mother: 'Why did you not let me die when I was a babe, since you saw that I was so ugly? Thou art beautiful, but I shall never have a husband.'

"Now when a woman is very beautiful, yet has a temper of the very devil, and an ugly child with it all, some witchcraft is never wanting in her, and La Diavolina, who well knew the cause why her child was cursed with such ugliness—as witches' children often are—seeing her daughter become ill with grief, was seized with such rage and spite that she resolved to be revenged on all the girls and young men who made the young girl so unhappy.

"Having a small garden, she planted in it a beautiful rose-bush, which she enchanted (*le amlio*), and the incantation was such that the roses gave out a wonderfully strong perfume and delightful beyond all belief, but if a girl smelt it she would certainly quarrel with her lover, and if a young man, he would do the same with his inamorata.[1]

"It was on a night during the Carnival that La Diavolina planted the rose-bush, and the next morning it was in full bloom with the most beautiful flowers, which sent forth such a perfume that it was noticed by all the neighbours, some of whom finally saw the plant from their windows. And all became mad to obtain a rose, yet were either afraid of La Diavolina, or averse to speak to her daughter, whom they had treated so unkindly; therefore they resolved on what is generally regarded as the easiest and cheapest course—that is, to steal them; and remembering the proverb that it is difficult—*rubare l'uovo sotto la gallina*—to prig an egg from under a hen, they waited till the hen had gone away from her nest, or until La Diavolina had quitted the house.

"But as *il diavolo é sottile, e fila grosso*—the devil is fine but spins coarse, or is very crafty when he gives away—so too is a *diavolina*, for the witch foresaw all this, and left the garden gate open that they might come in and steal freely, which they did, going in as softly as cats into a dairy, and coming out smelling like perambulating perfumers' shops, with roses hidden in their bosoms—*ben celate!—e la maledizione addosso* —and the curse stealing after them. For there was to be a

[1] It may here be observed that there are scents or chemical substances which produce extreme irritation and ill-temper, and that these, known more or less to witches everywhere, are especially used by the Voodoo.

ball that evening, and every one wanted a rose for himself or his girl, and some both.

"Now there was another charm at work, and it was this, that the spell of jealousy, hatred, and ill-temper being taken from the ugly girl, her mother was able to so act on her as to give her a certain charm, and then beauty, for by witchcraft people can be enchanted into anything if they are first *fascinated*. And it came about thus:

"All the youths and girls of the Via del Fiore who had the stolen roses did nothing but quarrel, flout one another, gibe, jeer, sneer, curse, and quarrel, like a bottle full of black scorpions, in a worse temper than a pack of devils in a holy-water font, so that smiles became as scarce among them as white flies, and frowns as common as black ones. Now it occurred to them all, by a kindred feeling of ill-temper, to confide all their spite and quarrelsome secrets to the ugly girl, whose name was Rosina, and she, finding that having a lover meant having a bitter foe, and that being a belle was no better than being a beast, felt wonderfully consoled, and began to smile and be happy, and to grow pretty, since there is no way in the world so easy to get anything as not to want it. For, as the saying is, when Pietro no longer wanted money, the next day his aunt died and left him a fortune.

"Then there was another ball, and as the saying is, *guerra cominciata, l'inferno scatenato*—war begun, hell let loose; so all the young folk of the Via del Fiore quarrelled ten times worse than before, while those of the other streets kept their temper, and made love cosily, and wondered what the devil had come over their friends—the end thereof being a general cutting of the whole party of those who wore roses.

"But the mother of one of the girls of the Via del Fiore, who was very observant, and knew how many loaves it took to make three, observed that the marvellous roses which never faded, no matter how long they were kept, and whose delicious scent spread as far as a girl could see a fine dress on another girl (which is a mile in fine weather), were all worn by those who were in such a bad temper that everybody began to call them the *indiavolate*, or 'bedevilled,' and this made her think of La Diavolina. Which having done, she at once smelt of one of the roses, and immediately felt herself impelled to call her daughter a *sfacciatella infama e civetta del diavolo, e da più una cagnetta*, which words mean in brief 'a shameless minx;' to which the daughter promptly replied by informing her parent

that she was a *brutta vecchiaccia*, an old broom, a disgusting old cow, and other objects, the whole being more suggestive of the Mercato Vecchio than of the commandment to honour thy parents. Then the mother saw exactly how it was, and 'took the measure of the business with a spoon,' as the Romagnoli say, for until these roses had come into the market the damsel had been a pattern of modesty and love.

"Then this mother quietly persuaded the young people to go to the ball without their roses, which they did; and that evening all went as smooth and fair as a pond by sunlight when there is no breeze, and not a duck to ruffle its surface. And therefore there was a fearful raging at La Diavolina, and it was all the worse because no one could now revile her daughter as ugly, for by this witchery she had become the most beautiful girl in the quarter, and it came to pass that she rolled the river in which they would fain drown her, back on them all. For, they having accused La Diavolina of sorcery before the tribunal, she replied that it was absurd, because, firstly, nothing was the matter with them; and, secondly, she had given them nothing, and that, if the smell of the roses had made them quarrel, she had nothing to do with it, because they had broken into her garden and stolen her flowers, very much against her will. For, as she said and pled, like any old lawyer, 'Three things are needed to make a pudding: *volere, potere, e sapere*—to want, to be able, and to know how to do it; and as it was beyond all question that she had shown no will or wish to make *this* pudding, the whole cooking of it came not unto her.'

"So La Diavolina was acquitted, and her daughter married *un bel giovane del tribunale*—a fine young man of the tribunal; and so she was happy and rich, which good fortune was an endless grief and cruel affliction to all the other dear girls of her acquaintance, who bitterly regretted that they had brought her into court, since it had only ended in her being happily courted."

This tale is more curious than would at first appear, and, to explain it, I will give the original and more tragic tale, as told in the Chronicle:

"We read that in the year 1562 a woman surnamed La Diavolina, who had a very deformed daughter, who was in consequence avoided by her own sex and not liked by the

other—the girl being therefore, as the saying is, *senza il damo*, or without a *beau*, and seeing all the others invited to balls and entertainments—determined to bewitch a rose-bush which she had in a vase, and to give the roses, by the aid of her daughter, to different young girls who lived in the same street. Which being discovered by a priest, La Diavolina was accused before the tribunal of the Inquisition, and by that tribunal punished. And in memory of this event that street was called *La Via del Fiore*."

To be accused before the Inquisition of witchcraft in 1562, at a time when Holy Mother Church was in the full bloom of mercy, sweetness, light, tenderness, wisdom, and power, had but one meaning, the extreme of torture and death by fire—*convicta et combusta*. This is, however, the very opposite of the tale as it was told to me, the reason being that, like a very great number of all stories which are not of the nursery kind, it has been preserved by *witches*, who, with true anti-Church instincts (as shown in many cases in my Etruscan-Roman Legends), have made the sorceress get the best of it, just as in gypsy tales the thief always escapes in safety with the plunder.

But, in all witch tales, the narrative is only a frame for some peculiar doctrine or principle, which is generally explained by the narrator after the story is told. Thus in many of the Etruscan-Roman Legends the incantation and ceremony forms the chief portion of the whole. In this the kernel is the belief that to get a spell or charm to work for evil or for good, the subject must be *fascinated*—that is, charmed or pleased; an idea still popular in the word *to charm*, which means to please, as to a degree it also does to fascinate or enchant. This done, anything could be done. The incantation must be sweetly and softly sung, if possible with gentle music, so as to soothe, on which I could cite from a score of learned men of all the ages. The *diavolina* wishes in this story to make her daughter beautiful, but cannot do it till she has brought

her into a cheerful mood—a difficult thing with a girl whose whole nature had been embittered. As in the "Golden Ass" of Apuleius, the key of the spell is the *rose*—and here I may briefly remark that I have more than once been reminded of that work in this tale. The stealing the roses from the enchanted garden is an old myth, and the rose is especially a witch-like flower, because, while it is beautiful and sweet-scented, it has also the hidden thorns which are above all things known as the type of witches' revenge.

I do not know whether I have made it clear to the reader, but there is most certainly in this whole story, apart from all imagination, a marvellous under-current of mysterious witch-lore, such as was believed to constitute deep wisdom and learning in the days of old. As in the old German legend, the sorceress Chrimhilde, who was herself a true *diavolina*, is in the end revenged on those who broke into her rose-garden.

"'Tis touching—stirring to a pitying smile, even such as we to earnest children give," writes Flaxius, "to note how our author labours in full and simple faith—*à la mode Germanorum*—among his witch-tribunals, and Nuremberg Latinists, and old German Rose-Gartens, and God only knows what forgotten and dusty rubbish and refuse of that Teutonic rococo age which was the very *quincaillerie*, or *Trödlerei*, lumber-room, trash-basket, and *rudera*, or old iron and rag shop of the Middle Ages, to establish unearthly mystery in a matter which I trow the local policeman, or any male or female *vaurien* of the vicinity, would have explained 'short order.' For that that old Diavolina had some roses in a garden I can well believe; also that they were surreptitiously prigged—Italian *prendere*, vulgarised—yea, and it may be that she had doctored them with devil's pepper, as is often done; but whether there was any *magic* in it all I gravely doubt. However, let it pass; 'tis all amusing—story, author and all!"

THE BAT

A LEGEND OF LA VIA LAMBERTESCA

"Now, as ye may see by Horus Apollo (ii. 53) and Pierius Valerianus, (L. 25, p. 251), the *Bat* is a wondrous beast, and because it is the only bird (as they esteemed it) which has breasts and suckles its young, they expressed by its figure, or hieroglyph, a nursing mother."—*Friedrich.*

"Bats abhor the plane-tree and ivy. For Alcithoë and the Sisters of Lucothæ are said by Ovid to have despised the rites of Bacchus, for which they were turned into bats, whence they so hate ivy that it kills them. Therefore it was hung up to drive them away."—*Curiosus Amuletorum Scrutator*, 1692.

"*Ricordomi d' aver' udito dire*—I do remember to have heard it said—that there was once in Florence a young man who lived in the Via Lambertesca, in the old tower there, from which the top is gone. And he, as many had done before him, fell in love with and married a beautiful girl—as it is to be hoped that many more will do, so long as it pleaseth God.

"But there was another young lady who loved this gentleman, and she was nearly mad with rage and jealousy; nor was it much helped by her being a witch, who, like all her kind, had more fire and more fuel, tenfold, than any ordinary woman; that is to say, she had all the passions of a she-devil and abundant means to gratify them.

"So the first thing she did was to bind or render impotent the bridegroom (of which there are many ways, with needles and keys, knots, and so on); but, however she did it, the young man every night on going to bed became cold and stiff as a corpse, nor did he recover from this till the next day, and then till night remained very weak and ill.

"Then his wife, thinking there was evil in all this, went to consult a wise old man who dwelt up in the mountains of Vallombrosa, and he said to her:

"'Your husband is surely *stregato e legato*—bewitched and bound. When he goes to bed make him turn all his clothes inside out. Hang up ivy, plane-leaves (*platano*), and sprinkle holy water all about.'

"All of this was done with great care, and a little while after, the windows being left open, there flew into the room an enormously large bat. The signore drew his sword, and closing the windows, chased it about. Then the eyes of the bat shot fire, and it made a loud, shrieking sound which was truly horrible. But when it swooped down as if to attack the wife, the young lord struck it with his sword, and it fell fluttering and dying to the ground.

"The gentleman felt in an instant that he was cured, and taking up the bat, he carried it out and threw it into a large adjacent closet.

"But when he looked for it in the morning, he found no bat lying in the closet, but the dead body of the witch."

After the foregoing story had been literally translated as here given, I found it, with no great difference, in a very curious and rare work entitled *Compendio dell' l'Arte Esorcistica* (which is remarkable as *not* containing any exorcisms), Venice, 1601, in which it is credited to a Paolo Ghirlandaio (*de Sortilegiis*). The difference in the tales as told is, that in the Ghirlandaian version there is a far greater display of red fire, a thousand demons, and screams unspeakable, while the witch who has worked the spell and made the bridegroom as a thing of naught, appears in person and is driven away. Nevertheless, if we accept the definition in London slang of a bat as "an evil woman who appears only by night," it may be granted that there is truly a *vespertilio* in both, and that the two stories agree in everything.

"Which ancient tale," adds Flaxius, "teacheth this: that cunning and crafty folk, especially those who use their small wits for mischief, are seldom *wise*—a thing that many 'sharps,' and others thereto, would do well to lay to heart, mark, learn, and inwardly digest, unto a residuum. For this *vespertilio* or bat-witch, had she been wise, would have anticipated a counter-stroke in the game, and not doing so, came to grief. Wherein there is a lesson of great import even for diplomatists, who are the most successful when wise and honest, and who, as in the cases of Talleyrand and Napoleon, make their signal mistakes in attempting petty cunning."

DELBERTO

"That man is like a falcon on the wing
Who makes the best of every earthly thing,
For as he rises higher still and higher,
He sees more clearly what he doth require
And wins more readily his heart's desire."—C. G. L.

THE following story is given just as I received it, that is to say, the exact *narrative*, but I have told it my own way, even as Maddalena did when she wrote it, or as she did who gave it to Maddalena, and so on upward, unto time when the record of man runneth not to the contrary, in the days of the Father of the Father of the Beginnings, as the Cabalists have it. And truly I cannot see why, since everybody else has told a tale —Heaven only knows how long, his or her own way— I should be called on to depart from good old-fashion usage and custom. Ladies and gentlemen will now listen to the pleasing tale of Delberto!

"There was once a very wise and learned old man, who was also a great magician. After many years he grew tired of mortal life.

"He had an honest servant named Delberto, a youth of kind heart, and to him the old man said:

"'I am about to die, *figlio mio*, and I wish thee a happy life. But remember it is far better to make a fortune than to receive it as a gift, and bear in mind what the proverb says:

"Chi ha, spende,
Chi ha fatto non lo rende;
Fortunato é colui
Chi impara a spese d'altrui."

"He who hath gold may spend it light,
He who hath earned it holds it tight;
He's fortunate in every sense
Who learns at other men's expense."

"'Therefore, my son, I will not leave thee a fortune, but something far better; and that is the power *di fare sempre del cattivo il meglio*—to change what is bad into good. Keep it a secret; guard it as thy life:

"Bocca chiusa e occhio aperto,
Non fé mai nessun disserto."

"A shut mouth and open eye
Never yet made any sigh."'

"Then the old man died, and Delberto went forth into the world. But he did not as yet understand the gift of the old magician, thinking it was only good advice to make the best of everything.

"But one day, when examining his shoes, which were beginning to break out, and were sadly worn, he said, without thinking: 'I wish that these shoes were better, for they are well-nigh as bad as can be;' when in an instant they became a beautiful new pair.

"'*Grazie a Dio!*' cried Delberto; 'I wish that my clothes were bettered in the same style;' and the garments became immediately handsome and new.

"Still it did not occur to him that he could do more than this with his power, but only that out of this he could get a living. So he went about the country crying:

"'*Vecchi abiti rifatti!*—Old clothes made new!'

"So the peasants brought him all their worn-out coats and tattered trousers, and ragged skirts, and torn shoes, and he renewed them perfectly, to the amazement of everybody, till he began to have his pockets full of money.

"One day he met on the road a good but very poor old man, who had a wretched donkey, which had gone quite lame and could not move.

"'O signore!' cried the old man, shedding tears, 'this ass is my whole means of making a living, and now I am ruined!'

"Delberto fixed his eyes firmly on the beast, and touching it, said:

"'Become better! Be large, and strong, and handsome. Better and better!'

"And at once the ass became the finest in all Tuscany, a perfect marvel.

"'*Bel signore mio!*' cried the old man, amazed, 'thou art the greatest cattle-doctor in the world. There lives not far away, in a castle, a great lord, who is a good soul and a merry, though he be noisy and blustering in his jests. He has many horses, and he said to me lately that he was in despair because he could not find a *manescalco*, or farrier, worth a *soldo*. Go to him and see what you can do.'

"So Delberto went, and after he had improved a number of wretched hacks and jades into magnificent steeds, the lord proposed to the marvellous horse-doctor to remain with him. Then the master bought up all the lame and blind and good-for-nothing screws in the country at a good price, so that they came by dozens daily, and Delberto bettered them all, so that, sharing equally with the signore, both grew rich.

"The old lord was a boon companion, and one night, when drinking with Delberto, he said:

"'This wine from my estate is sorry trash; one would say that *il diavola l' ha pisciato*. I wish it were better.'

"'Signore,' replied Delberto, 'I am something of a chemist as well as a horse-doctor. Perhaps something can be done here. Let me try.'

"And exerting his power, he made the bad wine into some which was most delicate and exquisite. The old signore drank till he had drained a mighty goblet, smacked his lips, and cried:

"'*Benedetto tu sia—te e la pancia che ti ha partorito!* Blessed be thou and the mother who bore thee!' For he loved good wine like a German. Then he drained another cup and cried:

"'Truly, I have an idea!—The devil behead me if I don't buy up all the bad wine in the country! *Che buon gusto!*—Ah, what a taste it has! We know:

> "Il vino al sapore,
> E la donna al colore."
>
> "By its taste the wine is known,
> But woman by her hue alone."

"'My son, I swear to thee, if thou canst play this trick when thou wilt, we shall become richer than the Pope, and we will not call the Cardinals our cousins. Verily I say unto thee,

that he who can change bad horses into good, and sour wine into nectar like this, *non é lontano del regno del cielo!*

"'Ah! 'tis a great pity that thou canst not do as much for women, and turn brutes into belles. Yea, I myself have a daughter—poor girl! She is clever and wise and learned, good as a saint, talks wondrous well, paints, and plays all instruments, but so ugly! Truly, simple ugliness is not the word; 'tis the very hideousness of horror. She will never go to the lower world, that is certain, for all the devils would run at seeing her—*é brutta da far scappare i diavoli.* For that reason thou hast never seen her, because the poor child never goes forth, for fear of frightening the scarecrows.'

"Then Delberto had an idea, and said to himself: 'Who knows? Girls, I believe, are very much the same as fillies;' and turning to the signore, he cried:

"'Let me see your daughter.'

"Now, from living so long with the magician, he had learned to know by sight when an evil spell had been cast on any one; and when he beheld the young lady, who was indeed appalling to look at, his heart was touched with pity, and he thought: 'This poor young lady has been bewitched; truly I never dreamed or believed the devil had such power, or that evil could do such work.' But not wishing to go too far at once, he only willed as he looked firmly at her that she should become a little better-looking.

"And at that instant her eyes grew large and beautiful, flashing forth such a winning glance that her father cried, '*Cospetto di Venere!*' while her hands grew small and beautiful, and ivory-white.

"Then the next day he charmed all her face and form into beauty, a little every day, until he had made her the loveliest girl in all Italy; and while doing this he found that she indeed well deserved it, for her mind and heart were all good, as her father had declared. And so he loved her truly from his heart.

"'So you want to marry my daughter!' cried the jolly old signore when Delberto asked him for leave to wed. 'Thanks to you a thousand times, my son, for taking from me the ugliest girl in Italy. Want her hand, do you? Well, you may have it, and with it *tutte le altre parte della sua persona*—and all the rest of her with it. *Beviamo*—let us drink!

"'I made, and thou hast re-made, her—yea, much better than new, O my son! and therefore art thou welcome to

our work. *Va bene—beviamo dunque*—'tis well indeed, and let us drink again; that is another miracle of thine, and not thy worst. Son-in-law, if thou art not a little god, thou art at least *il più buon diavolo*—the best devil in the world!'"

"This tale should teach us," quoth our Flaxius, "that even without magic power all people can make life blessed and happy by simply making *the best of everything*. For it was ever true, and aye will be—*sic in perpetuum*—while time rolls on—that all who earnestly seek and choose what is good will find more of it than the howlers, growlers, and scowlers, albeit the latter are, to their own loss, so terribly in the majority.

"O my excellent friend Grumbler, sir or madame—man, what the devil aileth thee and thine, that ye must ever at all times look at the worst, and find some fault with all? Know ye not that he who seeketh stinks will find malaria, and that those who call the devil bring him? No man did ever yet found a law or religion on this, the holiest of truths: to cheerfully, gladly and gaily, make the best of everything, and yet in it lies the best Bible ever dreamed of—*sic in perpetuum!*"

DIANA

"Diana, la vaga dea, la casta luna, la regina della caccia a cui i poeti greci e romani antichi attribuivano le più elette qualità, come bellezza, eleganza, seduzione, fascino, che divennero poi proverbiali, fu dai primi apostoli del Cristianismo appellata col nome di Dea delle Strege."—*Lady Vere de Vere, La Comunità delle Strege, La Rivista.*

It was not from books, but from a fortune-teller and witch in Florence, that I first learned that Diana is regarded as queen of all the witches; but I soon found that a number of writers in Latin, German, and Italian had recorded the same as a matter of popular belief from the fifth to the sixteenth century. This appears among the declarations of the Church Council of Ancyra, A.D. 450.

"That Diana Hecate was queen of the witches in classic times is known from many authors. She was compared, as goddess of the moon, to a cat which drove the star-mice. Herein she was like Bubastis, the cat-goddess of Egypt; and Freya, of the North, whose car is drawn by cats, is clearly a Norse Diana" (*Etruscan-Roman Remains*, p. 151). I could, indeed, fill many pages with citations from classic and mediæval authors which prove the ancient belief that Diana was queen of the witches, also of cats, and that as a cat she drove the starry mice.

Having asked a witch in Florence to find out what she could on the subject of Diana, I received the following, which I translate *verbatim:*

Diana.

"Diana was a very beautiful lady, who fell in love with her own brother, but he would not comply with her desire. Then she had recourse to sorceresses, and one of these, hearing her complaint, and the whole story of her wild passion, instead of

reproving, applauded her, and advised her to become a witch, saying that by so doing all her wishes would be gratified.

"Diana was much pleased at this, and said that she would very willingly become one of her friends, and she took to witchcraft with her whole heart and soul, going daily to meetings of fairies (*fate*) and witches. And it soon occurred to her that her beloved brother had a very beautiful cat, which he loved extremely, and which slept every night on his bed. Then Diana changed forms with the cat, and managed it so that she had her will. And when in the morning the brother found out the truth he was indeed angry, but Diana contrived with her wiles to so charm him that he yielded to her love.

"Now Diana had such passion for witchcraft, and became so mighty in it, that one night, at the meeting of all the sorceresses, she declared she would darken the heavens and turn all the stars into mice. Then all the *fate*, or witches, said: 'If thou canst do that, thou shalt be indeed queen of us all.'

"Then Diana went forth into the street, and took the bladder of an ox and a (certain) coin,[1] wherewith witches cut the ground whereon passers-by have trodden, and with such cut-earth and many mice she filled the bladder, and going into a wood, she blew into the bladder till it burst, and lo, a great wonder! for the earth became heaven, and for three days there was a great rain of mice, and the mice became stars or rain. And thus Diana made the heaven and stars and the rain, so great was her power, out of earth and mice, and so it was she became queen of the witches."

There is in law both direct and collateral evidence, and by the latter—that is to say, from classic records in books of which my chronicler knew nothing whatever—it is unquestionable that every part of this story or poem is of great antiquity. Diana is the Moon, and there is no myth so widely spread as that which makes the Moon the mistress of her brother the Sun, or *vice versâ*. This

[1] Evidently the *moneta delle strege*, an old Roman bronze coin of a certain kind with a sharp edge. I have never seen but one, which was sold me for witch-money, and which is now in my possession. The saying by Diana in the previous paragraph, that she would change the stars into mice, is a manifest error by Maddalena, or rather by the old woman from whom she obtained it. As the tale shows, Diana did the contrary, or changed mice into stars.

in the Italian story leads to her becoming a witch, and as I have elsewhere shown in the chapter on Intialo, first series (as Michelet also did in *La Sorcière*), such defiance of law and custom was of itself a law among wizards.

The connection of Diana with cats and mice I have already pointed out. But the creation of the heaven and stars and rain from a handful of earth and mice and Diana's breath is extremely archaic. It will occur to every scholar that it is simply impossible that this could be a modern creation. I believe it to be, like a vast number of these tales and traditions, a fragment of classic lore which has escaped classic record, or any writers, and a poem sunk to prose. For there was unquestionably a general, genial spirit of creation of mythic tales, sorceries, and quaint observances in ancient Italy among the people, and very little interest, if any, taken in it by literary men, until it had passed into the orthodox or High Church belief, or included, so to speak, in the recognised Scripture, the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid being proof of this. And I am not without the hope that the critical scholarship of a future time will determine that among these *traditions*—which I have gathered with great pains, be it said—there are many remains of this unwritten ancient mythology.

Allied to this is a short tradition, in which we have Diana as the lunar goddess of Chastity. It was given to me by the name of *Fana*, but my informant also said that it might be *Tana*. As *Tana* appears distinctly in still another tale, I am confident that it is the true name:

Tana, la Dea della Luna.

"Tana was very beautiful indeed, but extremely poor, and as modest and pure as she was beautiful and humble. She went from one *contadino*, or farm-house, to another to work, and thus led an honest life. Now there was a very ugly,

bestial, brutish fellow who was, after his fashion, raging with love for her, but she could not bear to so much as look at him, and repelled all his advances.

"But late one night, when she was returning alone from the farm-house where she had worked to her home, this man, who had hidden himself in a thicket, leaped out on her and cried: '*Non mi sfuggirai; sarai mia!*—Thou canst not flee; mine thou shalt be.'

"And seeing no help near, and only the full moon looking down on her from heaven, Tana, in despair, cast herself on her knees, and cried to it:

> "'I have no one on earth to defend me,
> Thou alone seest me in this strait;
> Therefore I pray to thee, O Moon!
> As thou art beautiful so art thou bright,
> Flashing thy splendour over all mankind;
> Even so I pray thee enlighten the mind
> Of this poor ruffian who would wrong me here,
> Even to the worst. Cast light into his soul,
> That he may let me be in peace, and then
> Return all in thy light unto my home!'

"When she had said this, there appeared before her a bright but shadowy form—*una ombra bianca*—which said:

> "'Rise and go to thy home;
> Thou hast well deserved this grace.
> No one shall trouble thee more,
> Purest of all on earth!
> When thou dost pass away,
> Thou shalt a goddess be,
> The goddess of the Moon,
> Of all enchantment, queen!'

"Thus it came to pass that Tana became the *dea* or spirit of the moon."

Though the air be set to a different key, this is a poem of pure melody, and the same as Wordsworth's "Goody Blake and Harry Gill." Both Tana and the old dame are surprised and terrified; both pray to a power above:

> "The cold, cold moon above her head,
> Thus on her knees did Goody pray;
> Young Harry heard what she had said,
> And icy-cold he turned away."

The dramatic centre is just the same in both. The English ballad turns into an incurable fit of ague inflicted on the offending young boor—the Italian witch-poetess, with finer sense, casts the brute aside without further mention, and apotheosises the maiden, identifying her with the moon. The former is more practical and probable, the latter more poetical.

Thana was the Etruscan Diana, and as I have shown in my work on Etruscan-Roman Legends, all the names of the old gods, now known as *folletti* or spirits, still survive, though rapidly perishing, in the Northern Italian mountain country.

It is worth noting that sundry old writers trace back the witch-sabbats, or wild orgies, worshippings of Satan, and full-moon frolics to the festivals of Diana. Thus Despina declares:

"It was customary of old to celebrate the nightly rites of Diana with mad rejoicing and the wildest or most delirious dancing and sound (*ordine contrario sen præpostero*), and all kinds of licentiousness, and with these rites as partakers were popularly identified the Dryads of the forests, the Napæœ of the fountains, the Oreads of the mountains, nymphs, and all false gods."

If we add to this that all kinds of outlaws and children of the night, such as robbers and prostitutes, worshipped Diana-Hecate as their patron saint and protectress, we can well believe that this was the true cause and origin of the belief still extremely current or at least known even among the people in Florence, that Diana was the queen of the witches.

In a fresco of the fourteenth century in the Palazzo Publico in Siena, Diana is represented with a bat flying under her, to indicate night and sorcery.

"'Tis a strange thing," remarks the subtly cynical Italian Flaxius, "that antiquity, while it publicly treated Diana as the goddess of Chastity, and all that was stately and cold, ever

had a shrewd suspicion that she was chaste, *i.e.*, chased or run after by divers lovers, unto whom she was not unkind; for instance, Virbio and Endymion. Yea, Byron observed that the virtuous moon beholds more naughtiness than the sun, and Shelley hath poetised this slander boldly. But it is truly remarkable that all of this same suspicion is carried out in detail by many of these witch-legends, from which the inference may be indeed drawn, that in them are preserved many genuine relics of classical antiquity not recorded by the orthodox writers. In them all she is the nocturnal Venus, the *dea vaga*."

Et post scriptum—a very severe reviewer of the first series of these *Legends* tartly informed the author that he *might* have made of them "a pretty fairy-book." Yea, how beautifully this of Diana, or the one before it, or the predecessor of that, or *La Diavolina*, *might* have been adapted to the nursery or Sunday-school! Just the thing—and yet our author has encumbered them with comment which puts them far beyond all infant reach! Truly there are cleverer men than he who can indeed write blue and green fairy-tales; but those which are gathered among witches are rather of the colour of an owl's eyes, or *noir du diable*, or the more fleeting hue of the Sabbat, "for which no sorcerer ever found a name."

THE DREAMS OF GUALTIERO

"I had a dream which was not all a dream."—BYRON.

"Sogno d'infermi, e fola di romanzi."—*Proverbi di Frediani*, 1694.

"Significari volentes aliquem nihil ad propositum respondere, nihil que agere, dicere solemus, '*tu sogni.*'"—*Angelo Monosini*, 1604.

THE following tale is truly translated from the Italian, but no reader will, I suppose, fail to detect the few touchings-up which I was compelled to make in a good story very badly, yea, laughingly, told.

"There was once a Florentine of great family and fortune, who had but one trouble in life, and that was his dreams, which were so varied and vivid, and wild and strange, that they wearied him more than his waking, and sleep gave him no rest.

"One day an old signore, who was to him a great friend, who was in secret learned in magic, and indeed a wizard, said to him:

"'Amico Gualtiero, I see with sorrow that thou sufferest, and I know the cause. Now I will tell thee what to do to have peace once more.

"'When thou goest to bed lay verbena under thy pillow, and say:

"'Io vo nella terra tenebrosa,
Sia ridente o lacrimosa,
Chi mi piace, che che sia,
Lo porterò a casa mia.'

"'Into the land of shadows I go,
Be it sad or merry it must be so;
And whatever I see, if it pleases me,
I will carry off and away with me.'

"'Then if in a dream you see anything which you like, touch it with your finger, and say, "*Vieni!*—Come!" And from that instant it will be thine.'

"That very night Gualtiero found himself, in his dream, in a great and magnificent hall, crowded with gentlemen and ladies, who seemed to be all particularly bent on treating him with every injury and indignity, as if he had been a dog or some detestable wretch. The ladies drew away their trains as he approached, as if fearing lest they should be contaminated by the touch, while the signori kicked and buffeted him, one and all.

"In this familiar party of the dream—*nella conversazione del sogno*—there was a gentleman who had a magnificent sword, the sheath and hilt of solid gold, richly set with diamonds, and with this he frequently beat Gualtiero, to make the others laugh.

"Then Gualtiero, who remembered all the time what his old friend had told him, watching his opportunity, caught hold of the sword and said, '*Vieni!*'

"Then in an instant all the dream vanished, and Gualtiero lay still sleeping in his bed. But in the morning when he awoke the sword lay by him; and the jewellers of Florence valued the gold and gems at ten thousand crowns, but said, every one, that the work on it was beyond all price, and that it was a marvellous thing, of quaint and rare antiquity.

"Now the next night Gualtiero, in a dream, found himself in an immense plain covered with grass; and there came riding at him a fierce and armed man whom he could not resist. And the cavalier put a cord about his neck, and then galloped away, dragging Gualtiero after him, as if he had been a bit of wood, over grass and dust, stocks and stones, and telling him that it was to make him tender.

"After a long drag the rider came to a city, and said to his victim:

"'Here I shall sell thee to be eaten.

"'Un uomo bene arrostito,
E buon per l'appetito.'

"'A man well roasted
'S a great delight,
Daintily toasted
For appetite.'

"Then Gualtiero, observing that the horse which his captor rode was a very magnificent one, approached him quietly, and touching the animal, said: '*Vieni!*'

"And when he awoke in the morning, he found in his

courtyard the most beautiful horse in all Italy, and such a wonder was it that for years men came to see it as they did to see the lions near the palace, or any other marvellous thing.

"And on the third night Gualtiero found himself, in a dream, in what seemed to be a treasury, or *zecca*, or mint; and he was being tormented by goblins, who pelted him terribly with handfuls of gold and silver coins, crying to him:

"'So you want to be rich, do you? Well, then, take *that —prendi!*'

"At last they rolled him on the floor, and smothered him in money, piling it over him. But just in the nightmare agony, he touched it and said: '*Vieni!*'

"And, as before, all vanished in a wink. But when he awoke he found, piled in his hall, such an immense treasure of gold coin that he knew at a glance he was the richest man in Italy.

"But on that day there stole into the room a little, very mysterious-looking old man, who said to him:

"'Signore Gualtiero, I am sent by the King of the Land of Dreams, to try to come to some agreement with you.

"'For you have carried away all his gold—yea, all the coin in his treasury, and he is in fear lest you rob him of other things.'

"'Well,' replied Gualtiero, 'why do the Incubi, his subjects, abuse me so, and treat me like a dog? Does your king think that I will not be even with him if I can? For years he has made me afraid to go to sleep—now let him tremble when I seek my rest. They who dance must pay the piper—*e chi taglia il melone lo paga*—and he who cuts the melon must settle for it. For verily I tell you that there was never yet a dog who bit me but what I had his skin, and thy king has worried me long and sore.

"'"'Tis all very fine, I dare say, for you Incubi

> "'"To worry and nag, and torture and wring,
> Rack and perplex, and nettle and sting,
> Sicken and gall and agonise,
> Draw blood from the heart and tears from the eyes,
> Bother and badger, and bully and bore,
> Wherret[1] and sadden the heart till sore,
> Turn peaceful rest into plague and pest,
> A sea of hot water, a hornet's nest,

[1] *Wherret*, an old English word, the original of "worrit."

Soothing draughts into horrible pills,
Waters of bitterness, extract of squills,
With horrors to make a parson swear,
Sights which no flesh or blood can bear,
Which would frighten one to a madhouse inured;—
All this from your king have I endured,
And I will make him truly repent,
Now we have come to a settlement.'

"'Yea, I will teach you to maltreat innocent people who come against their will into your country. After sweet comes bitterness, and you shall learn that it is not yet evening in Prato. Not at all.'[1]

"Then the old man, terrified at such a storm of words, said:

"'Wilt thou agree to this, that if the Incubi will torment thee no more, thou wilt not carry away any more precious objects?'

"'No,' replied Gualtiero; 'that is not enough. They must treat me kindly, and make it pleasant for me whenever I dream. On that condition I will promise not to carry away any more *richezze*, or wealth.'

"To this the old man agreed, and then departed.

"After this Gualtiero had only delightful dreams. But one night he met with a lady who was enchantingly beautiful, and said to her:

"'I love thee with all my heart, and it is terrible to think that thou in a minute mayest vanish like a vapour.

"'Bellezza e come un fiore
O come il vapore,
Che nasce e presto muore.'

"'Beauty is like a charming flower
Which fades away within an hour,
Or like a shadowy cloud which flies,
And even as it comes then dies.'

"Then the lady smiled, and said: 'Why dost thou not touch me and say "*Vieni*"?'

"'Because I have promised not to carry away any more objects of value.'

"The lady, still smiling, said: 'I am of no value. I am

[1] A very old Florentine proverb, meaning that punishment is inevitable: "*Non è ancor sera a Prato.* Florentinorum propria, quam Brunettus protulit. *Non è fatto sera a Prato.* Nondum evasit, quem sua manet pœna." —*Angeli Monosinii Floris Italicæ Linguæ, Venice*, 1604.

only a cloud and a dream. But thou mayest make the dream reality, and cause it to come to pass. That will not break the agreement.'

"Then Gualtiero touched her and said, 'Come,' when all vanished as usual. But on awaking he found the fair lady *accanto a lui*—by his side; and he married her, and they lived happily together.

"One day he said to her:

"'How dost thou like this life of real things?'

"'*Caro mio*—it is a little more real than the Land of Dreams, but it only lasts a little longer. You mortals do not know it, but you are all phantoms like us, *tutti fantasmi.* And then after this life which we lead here will come another, more solid and true, and so on for ever. As we climb the mountain we rise step by step to light:

> "'This life is all a fleeting show,
> The dim reflection of a star;
> The hardest thing in it's to know
> What 'tis we really are.'"

IL MOSCONE; OR, THE BLUE-BOTTLE FLY AND THE MOSQUITOES

"Now, when Bishop Otto of Bamberg, in the year 1128, came to Gutzkow, and destroyed the heathen temple and burned the idols, lo! there flew out of them immense swarms of *flies*, which would not depart till he had conjured them as witches and evil spirits."—*Temme: Volksagen von Pommern.*

FLIES are a great plague in Florence, but the wizards who peep and mutter have discovered some good in them. I do not say that they, like Heine's prisoner, regard them as *volaille* or game, but they discover in them spirits who may be conjured to bring good news, as appears by the following, which I am assured is, in Voodoo phrase, "a mighty strong conjuration":

IL MOSCONE.

"When you see a large fly, or blue-bottle, in a house, it is surely a sign of good or bad news, but that there will be news of some kind is certain.

"And to learn if the news be true, when you see the fly, repeat this incantation:

"'Moscone, Moscone, Moscone!
Che tu sia il ben venuto,
E che tu sia lo spirito di buono
Augurio per chasa mia!'"

"'Fly, be thou ever welcome.
Mayst thou be the spirit of good fortune
Unto this my home!

Fly, my beautiful Fly!
Buzz freely round my room,
And rest where'er thou wilt.

But give me at this instant
The answer if the tidings
I hear be good or bad.

Thou, O curious spirit
In form of a *moscone*,
Hast come on wings of wind,

So many leagues far distant,
As it were in a minute,
Directed by thy king,

Who is the Fly-king, truly,
Who hath two guiding spirits—
One who is of good fairies,

And one of evil witches.
If thou art of the former,
I pray thee bring good tidings.

But if they should be different,
And thou'rt a sprite of evil,
I beg thee leave me quickly,

And hasten to the Fly-king,
And beg for me his favour,
To change to good from evil.

And tell me in departing
If thou wilt bring good tidings;
But as thy buzzing language,

Passes my comprehension,
Then ope thy wings unto me,
The wings of gold and silver.

Then I will hope good tidings,
And know that thou, *moscone*,
Art well inclined towards me.

But if the news be evil,
Spread forth thy black wings to me,
For black denotes bad fortune.

And if thou canst not mend it,
Oh then, thou curst *moscone*,
Fly from my house this instant;

And take thy black news with thee,
And evil be thy fortune,
And mine be all the blessing!'

"And then open the window, and be the wings of the fly gold and silver or black, let him depart on his way."

The blue-bottle fly is here the same as the bee. The two were often classed together in ancient times. Thus in Isaiah vii. 18 we read: "And it shall come to pass that the Lord shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost parts of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria." Now we know that the bee was specially a messenger and news-bringer. It was a bee which carried messages from Rhœcus to the Dryad. Traces of this are found in nursery rhymes:

> "Bless you, bless you, burnie-bee!
> Say when will my wedding be?
> If 'twill be to-morrow day,
> Take to your wings and fly away."

This is just the same thing as when the Italian asks the big fly, if a certain thing is to be, to show it by departing.

The buzzing of flies and bees has always seemed to resemble human speech, which would fully account for their being regarded as carrying messages.

Nearly allied to the *Moscone* are the *Mosquilli*, which may be translated either as troublesome and vexatious flies—*mosculaje*—or large, not small mosquitoes. Whatever their exact dimension and quality may be to the natural historian, this is the legend which I learned of them:

Mosquilli.

"The Mosguilli (or Mosquilli) were once witches who had such power that they turned the son of a king into a great fly (*Moscone*); and he was loved by a maid who was herself a terrible witch, or rather an enchantress (*o sia una magha*). And she, having learned this thing, was in a great rage, and made a hard and bitter spell, for she took the powder of a horse[1] and pepper, and strewed it in the place where the

[1] What is curried from a horse in cleaning him, which, like pepper and thorns, is considered very efficacious to work mischief, if used with incantations. This "curry-powder" is carefully dried and pulverised.

witches would pass, and struck the powder with her wand, and said:

" ' Chiamo alla mia presenza,
Tutte le strege vile
Chi hanno confinato,
Il mio amante, Moscone,
Che sul instante possino
Fa tornar' il mio amante
Come era daprima,
E voi altre potrete
Sull' instante, mosquilli,
Mosquilli, diventare
E pace non avrete,
Sempre per l'aria volerete,
E con vostro ronzare
Ci sará chi crederá
Di sentervi fistiare
Col vostro ronzare,
Ci sarà chi crederá
Di sentervi cantare,
Ma non cantarete,
E non fistierete,
La forza non avrete
Ne di fistiare,
Ne piu di cantare;
Tutte le vostre forze
Saranno d'imprecare,
A chi Mosquilli
Vi ha confinati,
Ma le vostre imprecazioni
A me non arriverano,
Ne a me come neppure,
Neppur al mio amante;
La vostra forza tutta
Negli spille l'avete,
Ma a me male
Mai non farete,
Alla mia porta
Entrare non potrete,
Che ci sta un sacchetto
Che non vi fará passare,
Dentro ci e ruta e sale,
Che i vostri spilli
Voi stessi vi farò bucare,
Anche il comigno
Che mandera indietro
Lo spirito maligno
Incensa che vi terrà in dietro,
E non potrete entrar dentro
Se poi dalla finestra
Vi volete . . . entrare,
Volete provar passare,

Vi trovarete una bella cesta,
Di scarlatto rosso ricoperta,
Dove dentro ci sarà
Un vaso di ruta,
Un ferro di cavallo,
E di morto vi trovarete
Un teschio pieno di pepe,
E sale e di pecore,
E di agnelli vi trovarata
I peli che tutti questo
Sarà immischiati
Di spilli bianchi e neri,
E nastri rossi e neri
Tutti incrociati.
Sarà una jettatura
Tanto forte che vi farà
Male stare, e in casa mia
Non potrete entrare quando
In qualche casa entrarete.
Per fare del male a qualchuno
A qualchun' dovranno dire.'

" 'O mosquillo se tu siei,
Un mosquillo buono dal cielo,
Calato, vola per l'aria in pace,
Che da nessuno tu sia toccato,
Se siei un mosquillo strega,
O stregone, in nome della maga
Che ti ha confinato,
Le corne e la castagna,
Io ti farò e il malocchio
Col' aglio mi levera,
A cio che dentro al catino
O recipiente che câva
Il malocchio, tu possa cascare,
E una gamba ti possa levare,
E cosi quando vi avranno
Levata la gamba fuggirete,
Zoppicando, e quando sarete
A casa, le ore che avete da stare
Da me sarete zoppo, al zoppicarsi
Vi cognoscerrano stregone e vi scanserrano.

Incantation of the Mosquitoes.

" Here I summon to my presence
All the witches who have conjured
Him I love into a blue fly,
That they may this very instant
Give him back his natural figure.
Ye yourselves I also conjure
By my power into mosquitoes.

Now mosquitoes ye become,
In the air to ever hum,
Singing, stinging, as ye go;
Peace ye never more shall know.
Some to piping will compare
Your tingling buzzing in the air;
Some will say it is your singing
When they hear your voices ringing;
Yet in this they will be wrong,
'Tis neither piping nor a song,
For no power will ye have
To pipe an air or sing a stave.
The only power you'll have will be
To curse the one who conjured ye.
But all your cursing, as ye swarm,
Will never do me any harm;
For all of it, and ten times over,
Will never hurt me nor my lover,
Nor your maledictions come
Unto me nor in my home.
All your strength is in your stings,[1]
All your power in your wings,
And me your harm
Does not alarm,
Since through my door
Ye'll come no more,
For I've here a little sack
Which will make you all turn back.
In it there is salt and rue,
Which hath the power ever true,
Be ye imps or be ye elves,
To turn your stings against yourselves.
In it there is also cummin,
Which will quickly stop your hummin';
And with it holy incense, which
Hath power to make the devil itch.

If through the window you would fly,
You'll find there is a chest thereby,
A box of brilliant scarlet hue,
In which there lies a vase of rue,
And of a horse the iron shoe,
A human skull with pepper full,
Salt, and of lambs and sheep the wool,
And pins both black and white you'll spy
In crosses placed to blast your eye,
Making a *jettatura* which
Might scare the devil or a witch;

[1] *Spille*, also pins, a jeer at witches as if their sorceries to do harm did not go beyond using black and white pins in conjuring, or the mere rudiments.

A glorious and tremendous charm,
Enough to keep us all from harm.
And if by any chance ye come
To work us evil in our home;
Thus shall the sufferer boldly speak,
And with this charm your sorcery break.
'O mosquitoes, if ye be
Good, and fallen from heaven on me,
Oh then in peace take to your wings,
And don't torment us with your stings;
But if ye wizards be, or witches,
I conjure you by that name which is
A spell to blast you black and blue,
The name of Her who conjured you
Into those forms! Now, lo! divine,
I make the horn and chestnut sign,[1]
And then with garlic ever by
I blast with ease your evil eye.
At once into this vase you'll fall,
And that will be the worst of all,
For then I'll pluck a leg from thee—
Where then i' the morning wilt thou be?
Limping about at home and lame,
Known as a witch and spurned to shame!'"

This is extremely curious, as containing more of the old Roman-Etruscan charms against sorcery than any other out of the hundreds of similar incantations which I have collected. There is also in it a certain vivacity, almost like humour, which I trust is not entirely lost in the translation.

[1] The *jettatura* with fingers, and that of the thumb between the index and middle finger, called divine by the Romans, who used it also against witches.

LA VIA DEL GOMITOLO DEL ORO, AND HOW IT GOT ITS NAME

"So, like a fool, she frittered life away,
Still singing: 'So it is, for such am I;
Therefore let all things drift—
Some one will pay.'

To which a spirit answered her, with Job:
'*Quasi de stultis mulieribus*
Locuta es.'—'Thou talkest like a fool!'
To which she answered, with a silly laugh:
'He is a fool, therefore, who talks to me.'"—C. G. L.

THE translation of the following legend is *word* for word as I received it, but the conclusion as regards poetic *form* is my own.

"In the Via del Gomitolo del Oro, or Street of the Golden Skein, was an old house in which there dwelt an old man who had a beautiful young wife, who had married him for love—truly not of himself, but of his vast fortune. This gave much cause for gossip to the neighbours. And she had a strange fancy for always braiding and playing with skeins of gold, tossing them about in caprice.

"And when any one said, 'Thou wilt be unhappy some day from this marriage,' she replied, 'When I was a child I always played with skeins of cotton; now I play with skeins of gold. An old man is good to begin with; he may lead the way to a young one. I shall have a change. The same soup every day at dinner, the same husband all the time, is tiresome. Begin by marrying a poor young man—you will be poor, and not go to a ball nor live in great society. For a few caresses and smiles the old husband gives me diamonds, which I keep, and then there are dresses meanwhile.'

"'Beware,' said her friends. '*Chi più abbraccia meno stringe*—Who grasps at too much gets least.'

"'*Chi si contenta, gode*—Who is contented is happy,' she replied.

"She began by love-affairs with lords; she wearied of them, and descended to vulgar intrigues with ruffians, and at last fell into the power of a rascal who robbed her of all her jewels; and when he could get no more, the villain went to her husband, and telling him all the story, said:

"'Now give me a thousand crowns, or I will publish your disgrace everywhere.'

"The husband, in a rage, dismissed him, and then had his wife confined as a prisoner in an old house in the Gomitolo del Oro. And in scorn he gave her skeins of gold thread, saying: 'Thou didst once play with cotton, and then didst marry me to play with gold like a fool, so play with it.'

"So she sat there playing with the gold thread all day long, singing:

"'I was a foolish wife,
And I married a husband old;
I idled away my life,
To play with skeins of gold.
I thought it was jolly,
'Twas all but folly,
Playing with skeins of gold.

I braid them and I wind them
In many a shining fold,
All in my hair I've twined them,
The beautiful skeins of gold—
All idle sport
Of every sort,
Playing with skeins of gold.'

"So she sat for years playing with the skeins, and so she died. And from that time the street was called *La Via del Gomitolo del Oro*."

This story has but a single feature, and in that it is almost identical with a German tale which powerfully appealed to the poetic imagination of Heine—that of the princess who passed her whole life and wasted her fortune in crushing, rustling, and cutting to pieces expensive silks, satins, or cloth of gold. The lesson that all selfish, wasted lives amount to mere playing with skeins—be they of gold or cotton—though the tale is very simply told, is still vigorously set forth. Among the

great number of these legends which I have collected, none has struck me so much by its poetry of conception as this of the Gomitolo del Oro.

To which the observant Flaxius appends: "There are in the world, of women not a few, and many men, I ween, well thereunto, whose whole life and highest aim is really not to win gold for real pleasure, or even for avarice or aught solid, but merely to live in its glitter and sheen—to *frôler* and *froisser*, rumple and rustle *drap d'or* and damask drapery, jingle jewels, in a kind of *fade* ostentation, as doth a professional beauty or an actress famous for being famous, nothing more, and being diamonded or demi-monded for famousness; or a man or woman who is among the Grand Lamas of Fashion, which meaneth next to God for most of us —and who, when known, is simply a twister of gold skeins, a fretter and tearer of embroidery, a simpleton into an idol made."

LEGEND OF LA PIAZZA DEI TRE RE, OR HOW THE THREE KINGS OF THE EAST APPEARED TO A YOUNG MAN IN FLORENCE

"An Magi qui ex Oriente venerunt, et recens natum Christum Bethlehemi adorarunt, Magi fuerunt, et Fascinatorum sedem obtinuerunt? hic quæritur."—FROMMAN, *Tractatus de Fascinatione*, Nuremberg, 1674.

SAVING correction, the following tale is given word for word from the original.

"Where there is now the Piazza dei Tre Re, stood in old times a very ancient palace in which dwelt a young man who was learned, good, and wise, and yet withal extremely poor, since all his means were drawn from renting out a few rooms in the palace, and from giving lessons; yet for all this he was so charitable that he thought far more of the poor than he did of himself. Nay, if he had but a *lira*, he spent only a third of it on himself, nor could he really sleep in comfort till he had invited some poor soul to lodge over-night in his palace, where he gave the guest what he could for food.

"And he would long since have sold the palace, were it only to have the means to do more good, had not his parents, who had brought him up in the ways of benevolence and humility, said to him when dying, "Never part with thy home, come what may; for money is soon spent, but while thou hast the dwelling, thou hast in it a shelter for the poor.

"He was so devoted to such good work, that if no one came to beg for aid, he always placed himself at a window looking on the street, and waited till midnight to see if any passed by whom he could assist. And so it happened that one evening while thus watching there came three very old, infirm, apparently poor men, who paused under the window till one said:

"'Where indeed can we find lodging to-night, since it is so late and we know nobody in all the city, and we are too weary to go much farther?'

"Thereupon the young man, full of joy, cried, 'Come in; here you are welcome, for I was waiting for such guests.' So when they entered, he treated them as kindly as he could, giving them, it is true, only bread, cheese, and wine for supper, but explaining to them why he lived so poorly, so that he might have the means to share his humble meals with the poor. Then they asked him many questions as to his life and means, and soon found, as wise men would, that he was entirely given to the one idea of doing good.

"In the morning before they departed, one spoke to the young man, and said:

"'Not for a night's lodging nor for charity did we come here, O youth! But having heard, even from the very angels, thy praises, and how thou didst pass all thy life in doing good as silently and modestly as it could be done by man without vanity, we came to see into this thing ourselves, and find indeed that it is all true. Know that we are the three kings Caspar, Baltasar, and Melchior, the givers of gifts, and we will each bestow one on thee.'

"Then Caspar (Gasparro) gave him a great lump of frankincense, and Baltasar a pound of myrrh, and Melchior an old gold crown-piece of money.

"'You may take every day from this incense one half and sell it, but the next morning there will be a pound of it as before. And you may take half the myrrh, yet always have the same quantity. In like manner, you will find by the gold piece another like it, one every day. Take these with our blessing, and may you be as happy in your life as you have striven to make others happy!'

"Saying this, they disappeared, leaving their gifts, which proved to be indeed productive and profitable, so much so, that, although the young man, to the end of a very long life, continued to give away two-thirds of his income in charity, he still died as rich as he was beloved. And thus it came that the Place of the Three Kings got its name."

This is the old story of the goddesses who appear to Paris, the three *fate*, or Norse or Weird Sisters, who come to Norse and Mediæval heroes, or the three Wants who visit Guicciardini, always as rewarders with appropriate gifts. It takes many forms, but it is always the same old tradition.

But what is most interesting in the tale is that in it the three Magi appear as giving just such mysterious gifts as are peculiar to magicians. It is to be observed that in Italian witchcraft there is only a very limited number of saints who are recognised as sorcerers, *e.g.*, Antony and Simeone, and at the head of these are the three Magi, even the Church having been obliged to compromise with popular superstition regarding them, by striking the so-called witch-medal, which is admitted by believers in sorcery to be an effective substitute for the old witch-medals, or certain Roman coins used as amulets. Fromman, in his work on Fascination, raises the question whether the Magi were enchanters—*fascinatores*—or not, and cites a great number of ancient and learned authorities for or against the opinion, the whole amounting to that of Buntingus, who, in his *Itinerarium Sacr. Scriptur.* Part iii. page 283, decides that "they were men deeply learned, not only in the book of Nature, but also in the Christian religion," which, considering that the Christian religion did not exist when they appeared, shows that they must have been conjurers indeed.

All the associations of the Magi smack of sorcery. Thus Riolanus (*apud D. Bartholinum, Cent.* 2, *Hist. Anat.* 78) gives the following as a spell against epilepsy, declaring that it will cause the patient to at once arise, if it be thrice softly murmured in his ear:

"Sæpe se expertum affirmat Epilepticos resurgere, si ter in aurem vulgati versiculi insusurrentur:

> "'Gaspar fert myrrham, thus Melchior Balthasar aurum,
> Hæ tria qui secum portabit nomina Regum,
> Solvitur à morbô Christe pietate caduco.'

"In France, in the Department d'Ille-et-Vilaine," says Paul Vierzon (*Les Présages de Bonheur, &c.*), "when a young girl would see in a dream her future spouse, she

must put, on going to bed on Christmas Eve, three leaves of laurel under her pillow, and say before she sleeps:

"'Gaspard,
Balthazar,
Melchior,
Dites-moi en dormant,
Qui j'aurai de mon vivant!'"

PICO DI MIRANDOLA

"Readeth the Cabala,
Like wise Mirandola."
—*Crichton*, by G. P. R. James.

"An old—
A legend-leavèd book, mysterious to behold."
—Keats.

Pico di Mirandola lies buried in Santa Croce. A modern writer of celebrity, in eulogising the great Humboldt, based his admiration solely on the fact that the Baron had travelled so extensively, and thereby got into so much Good Society—the epitaph upon great Pico's tomb is chiefly based on his conjectured explorations in India! He was really one of the great scholars of the Renaissance—one, indeed, not only of very many, but of very broad sides, he being "grand in Greek and unequalled among Christians as a Hebraist." There is, indeed, a reference to the latter in the text. I would here say that, for reasons which I will give anon, I have omitted much of the original and supplied certain details, or rather indulged in certain *capriccii*, which the reader will readily detect, and, I trust, pardon.

Pico di Mirandola.

"There was anciently in Florence a very old and wealthy family named di Mirandola, and the couple who represented it had a son named Pico. Now, this boy by nature wanted neither wit nor sense, and his father observing it, wished to have his son well trained in learning, so that he might make a figure at court and in the world. For in those days learning

was made extremely fashionable by the reigning family, and great scholars were sure to come to something, if they had but sense.

"Unfortunately, the good man, as regards letters, was like the lawyer whom the people called Necessity, 'because he knew no law.'[1] And, having grown up between the country and the camp, he had no idea that there was any kind of learning save the clerical, so put poor Pico under the training of an old-fashioned monk, who regarded everything as tending to sure damnation which was not to be found in Monk-Latin or the Church Fathers. And he indeed crammed the boy for three or four years with points of doctrine, papal edicts, decretals, lives of saints, dogmatisms and catechisms, school-mendacities, and similar trash, till his brain buzzed as with a thousand bees, and yet he was at the end of it all, as regards any true learning, *doctor in utroque nihil.* Yet, being clever and gifted, he mastered all this dreary stuff with dire endurance, hoping to see some good come of it all, while marvelling that God had ever made geese.

"Now old Messer di Mirandola having heard that monk praise the learning of his pupil, and being informed that in the family of a noble friend of his in Florence there were weekly meetings where scholars and clever people of all kinds were welcomed, resolved that his son should go there, never doubting but that Pico would take the shine out of the most brilliant of them. And he was specially urged not to be backward, because it had been the great end and aim of all his theologic learning:

"*Firstly*, To *confute* somebody, that is, to disprove, defeat, explode, invalidate, knock down, disparage, and shut up any person who discusses with you any question or point in culture and literature.

"*Secondly*, To believe that true learning shows itself by getting above the comprehension of your adversary—which means anybody who talks to you—and thereby convincing him that you know more than he does.

"*Thirdly*, To make broad and great assertions as to the general ignorance and stupidity of your adversary, and prove it by picking out and exaggerating trifling errors.

"Now it was with this precious provision of priggery and pedantry that poor Pico was sent to distinguish himself in

[1] An old Italian saying. *Proverbi Italiani*, 1618.

one of the most brilliant saloons in Florence, at a time when Culture—

> "'—— with its rhetorike sweet
> Enlumined all Italie,'

and Papism was well nigh extinguished in Paganism. But I will not dwell on the entire and crushing defeat, the dire *degringolade*, the *fiasco*, the *affaire flambée* which Pico made of it, when he attempted to take part in a literary discussion in which his first assertion was to the effect that Greek was all sorry trash which only a fool would learn, the classic mythology pure rot, and the *volgare* or Italian language unfit for literature.

"Now his chief opponent was a young lady of overwhelming beauty, with whom he fell in love at first sight. But having been carefully trained to believe that all women were only bags of ignorance, vice, deceit, and folly, who adored those who treated them most rudely, he attacked her with specially coarse severity. Whereupon he was disarmed with wonderful ease and grace by a polished weapon, and made to feel to his very heart of hearts what a poor, contemptible, utterly ignorant wretch he was, wallowing in mud in a monkish midnight. And after having been most courteously in words, but very severely in argument, set right, he was let alone, and, utterly crushed by shame, left the palazzo without a word to any one.

"Now there had been present at this discussion a very wise man of marvellous learning, a *mago* withal, and much more than well read in books, for he could peruse the human heart from the face; and his attention being drawn to Pico, he observed that there was in him no want of genius, but that he had merely been badly educated, and greatly pitying the boy, resolved to take him in hand. And so he followed him, and found him seated in blank despair in the wood where is now the Cascine.

"The young are soon touched by tenderness into confidence, and Pico accordingly poured forth his sorrow, explaining how he, after having been flattered and cockered-up into the belief that he was a miracle, had found that he was an ass; cursing withal his teacher, and the day he was born, with the decretals, cat- and dog-matism, and all pertaining to them.

"Then the elderly gentleman said to him: 'I will speak to thy father, and explain to him that thy tutor does thee more harm than good, and he shall be dismissed. But do thou take

this book from me and study it carefully. Let no one know that thou hast it—speak not a word thereof, or it will vanish.'

"Saying this, he produced a small, very ancient, and marvellously bound book, which, however, expanded as it came to light, and gave it to Pico. And with this the old man disappeared with a pleasant smile as if auguring good fortune, leaving the youth amazed at such an adventure.

"But he was much more astonished when, opening the book at haphazard, he read these words in a beautifully distinct italic:

"'*Pico di Mirandola, be not cast down, nor ashamed that thou hast had such a rebuff, for the fault is not thine, but thy teacher's. Now tell me, as to a friend, what thou desirest!*'

"Then Pico replied, 'I would fain learn Greek, and whatever also is becoming a gentleman and scholar, and be as others are in this our age, and, if it be possible, to become a leader among the learned.'

"Then he opened the book and read:

"'*All this may come to pass, dear Pico, if thou wilt follow my advice, and study me with a good will, nor is there aught on earth in which I will not advise thee.*'

"And it came to pass as the book promised. For it taught him Greek by a new and improved method, and Hebrew in quarter time, and answered every question about everything, nor was it above telling him many tales and rare jests, or teaching him games and the art of conversation. And when he wished to read any book which had ever existed since time begun, he had only to wish for it, and lo! it was all in the precious volume. It was an universal library, an infinite cyclopædia, a daily newspaper, a mentor, guide, philosopher and friend; it told him what to say to ladies to please them, and gave him straight tips for the races, and numbers for the lottery. It was a Bradshaw and complete guide-book for every place when he travelled, and also a Cook's Tourist and a Cook-book when wanted.

"Now Pico di Mirandola had never forgotten the young lady scholar before whom he had suffered such ignominious defeat, and the thought of recovering grace in her eyes made him study all the harder. Therefore, after a time, when he had made progress in letters and arts, the benevolent book, which had coached him up for all possible casualties of conversation, thought he might again visit the *palazzo* where he had appeared as the very Prince of Duffers.

"'Now,' said the book, 'I will shrink up into a very small volume which you will carry in the palm of your hand. You need not open me, all will appear on the cover. And if you get stuck (*tralasciato*), just take a peep at me.'

"It was with very different feelings and another mien that Pico di Mirandola sought the palace for a second time. For he remained modestly listening and taking note of all that was said, and while admiring the grace and modesty with which opinions were advanced in courteous terms, he was also encouraged at finding that he himself was really not so much inferior to many whose force, as he perceived, lay more in manner than in learning. Till at last, when the conversation ran on language, the young lady remarked:

"'It is curious indeed that in the ancient tongues so many words when reversed have an opposite meaning. I would ask your opinion, Messer di Mirandola, but I believe that you scorn all tongues save Monk-Latin.'

"'It is true,' replied Pico without looking at his book, 'that I once hated Greek. But as a Greek writer has said, "We do not learn to respect a brave enemy till we have fought him," and I have struggled with Greek, I trust not in vain. And as for the reversed meanings of words, let us take Rome—*Roma*. We go into the idea which it expresses with warlike feeling, but turning it backward we find *amor* or love.'

"There was a buzz of approval at this conceit, and the young lady smilingly said:

"'Perhaps it is only a Platonic love which Rome inspires. But what do you think of Platonic love?'

"'Truly that, like many things which begin with *play*, it is apt to end in earnest. And that, like all *tonics*, it generally inspires a keen appetite—in this case for what is most un-Platonic, or the reverse—just like Rome.'

"Then, being encouraged, he proceeded to illustrate reversed meanings as shown in the Cabala, it being the opinion of some that the Hebrew tongue was formed on this principle, and that in sorcery, verses which read the same backwards and forwards were the most powerful spells, of which indeed there is one to be seen on the pavement in the Baptistery in Florence.

"Then a young man who was anxious to mortify the youth asked him why it was that he had not condescended at his first visit to favour the company with some of the fruits and flowers of learning of which he was now so liberal. And Pico with a smile replied—*scherzando:*

"'When Junius Brutus played the idiot
Before the men of Rome, it was to find
The fitting time and season when to speak.'

"And the end of it all was, that in two days all Florence spoke of Pico as of one risen from the dead or transfigured, some even saying that he could predict your future husband and recover stolen goods. But it is certain that the young lady fell in love with him, and that he married her, and that the happy pair talked Greek together to the end of their days.

"As for the book, it is said that it was buried with him in his tomb in Santa Croce."

The text of this story as I received it consisted of sixteen pages, of which fourteen were taken up with a very stupid, confused account of the love-making between Pico and the lady, only two containing a brief account of the book and the part which it played. But having a feeling that in the true original, whatever it was, the proportions were reversed, I ventured to restore them. The pudding had been made originally according to a good recipe, but the cook had blundered in the making and proportions "most dumbnably."

Now, whether I have made a moderately interesting tale of it, setting forth old Florentine life and ways, the reader or reviewer may decide, but well I trow none of ye wad ha' gin a bodle for the story as I have it in manuscript, which was of itself most evidently a vulgar paraphrase, by some reader of penny-sentimentals, of a simple and strange old tale now lost, and thus told to Maddalena, who wrote it down literally as she learned it. So ye may call this all an original tale by me if ye will, but had I done so, somebody might, could, would, or should, accuse me of plagiarism.

"And now," exclaimed the spiteful Didius of Yorick, "I have got him fast hung up upon one of the two horns of my dilemma—let him get off as he can."

And after all I am only a little Perraultier than Perrault, Langer than Lang, or Grimmer than Grimm!

THE RING; OR, DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

> "What man so wise, what earthly witt so ware,
> As to discry the crafty cunning traine,
> By which Deceit doth maske in visour faire,
> And cast her colours dyèd deep in graine,
> To seeme like Truth whose shape she well can faine?"
> —SPENSER'S *Fairie Queene.*

I TELL the following tale with needful correction but no alteration, just as I received it.

"There was, long ago, in Florence a Grand Duke who was as shrewd as a fox, and *scaltro come l'orco*—crafty as a devil.

"He had a courtier friend or intimate, as such court friends go, whom he loved well enough for company, but not enough to trust him out of sight; and this gentleman believed himself to be clever enough to cheat the Duke, and only waited for an opportunity.

"One day this good signore, whose name was Flaminio, showed the Duke a ring in which was set what appeared to be a splendid diamond.

"'*È bella cosa*—'tis a fine thing,' said Flaminio, 'and I got it at a great bargain for six hundred crowns.'

"The Duke examined it closely, and noted that the stone was false, and worth about five crowns. But he kept his thoughts close, though he opened his mouth and said:

"'Will you sell it to me for eight hundred crowns?'

"'I had rather not,' replied Flaminio.

"'Say a thousand, then. I can go no higher.'

"Then Flaminio, as it seemed rather unwillingly, and as a great favour, sold it to the Duke, saying:

"'But I sell it without recourse. I do not guarantee it, for I may have been deceived, as all men may be in gems.'

"'Never mind,' replied the Duke; '*Chi compra, guardi.* I will take the risk.'

"When Flaminio had taken the thousand crowns and departed, the Duke sent for a jeweller, and said:

"'Look at this stone and tell me how much it is worth.'

"'Signore, about five crowns.'

"'As I thought,' replied the Duke. 'Now take it out and set in its place a real diamond exactly like it.'

"'That will cost two thousand crowns,' answered the jeweller.

"'Good. I will pay it. But keep the affair a secret.'

"The change of stones was promptly effected. That evening Flaminio and many other courtiers were invited to supper by the Duke, and Flaminio had told them all, as a good joke, the whole story.

"Therefore they soon began to rally the Duke with much laughter, declaring that his diamond was glass. But the Duke replied:

"'*Cari Signori*, I think that you are in error. I know something about diamonds, and I will bet a thousand scudi all round that this stone is real. Only remember that it is at all risks, and without recourse, for it was under such condition that I bought it.'

"Whereupon twelve of those who were present betted each a thousand crowns that the stone was not a diamond.

"Then the Duke sent for the Signore Benevenuto Sellini, and asked him:

"'How much is this stone worth?'

"The Signore Benevenuto examined it, and said:

"'At least two thousand crowns; and I should have tried to sell it to your Highness for three thousand.'

"The twelve gentlemen looked at this like a dozen Roman asses.

"'Pay up, gentlemen,' exclaimed the Duke; 'pay up your honest debts! It rains manna for me to-day, and I must gather it ere morning. Pay up to a penny, as soon as one can say *Amen-ny!*'

"'Chi paga debito fa capitale,
Chi non paga andrá allo spedale.'

"'He who pays up his debts makes capital;
He who doth not goes to the hospital.'

"'A fowler came at length and caught the bat;
Wise is the mouse, and wiser still the rat,
But in the end they find a wiser cat.'"

VENUS AND THE RING

"There was a Spanish Bonifacius
Who wrote of mortals loving statues;
But an Italian changed the plan,
And made a statue love a man,
And come between him and his bride
Till he was nearly petrified
With fear. But soon a brave magician
Did rescue him from this position,
Where he in grief was wallowing,
As you may read i' the following."

I ONCE made the acquaintance in Florence of a girl of about twenty years of age, named Maria or Marietta Pery. She was a dressmaker, and has since become a concert-singer. She was an improvisatore, and had the gift to a degree which I have never seen in any other of writing her productions in the most off-hand manner, with extraordinary rapidity, and almost without correction or error. I do not write slowly myself, but she would complete a long poem in far less time than I could copy it.

Marietta had a memory full of old legends and fairy tales, and it was quite a matter of indifference to her whether she wrote them out in a poetical or prose form. She gave me the one "On the Origin of the Cricket of the Cascine" in both. It is worth observing that she did not seem to be aware that there was anything at all remarkable in her poetic power, and she never made any display of it, or spoke of it to any one.

This ability to write poetry in measures or metres, which seems to us indicative of great culture, is, however, common in Italy. It is due to two facts—firstly, that even the great majority of the halfpenny broadsides, which are

more diffused here than elsewhere, are in the stately form of *terze* or *ottaverime*, or such as were used by Luigi Pulci and Ariosto; and, secondly, that till very recently it was common for many, even among the poorest people, to have by heart an incredible quantity of poetry even by great authors.

Henry Heine and Robert Southey, and I know not how many more, have repeated the old story of the young man who put a gold ring on the finger of a statue of Venus; how, when he married, Venus came at night between him and his bride, protesting that he had wedded her with the ring; and how he finally got rid of her by means of a necromantic priest—it was neck or nothing romantic in this case, for the clergyman was found strangled a few days after. And having spoken of this legend to Marietta Pery, she recalled it, as she did, indeed, almost every common legend of which I ever heard, being, like all true poets, naturally gifted with a love of quaint lore; and then, of course, singing, wrote it down. And what this Pery at the gate, or when at her best pace, sang, was as follows. I give it here, as I have done another of her poems, according to the first rough draft, without the least correction:—

VENERE E L'ANELLO.

"Era una volta un principe Romano,
Di bella principessa d'amor colto
E per pegno d'amor l'un l'altro in mano,
Dovea in dito un anell' tenere avvolto;
Era forte, era bello, era guerriero,
Era gentile ed era pur severo.

Impegnato in un giorno una partita
Al giuoco del pallon con degli amici,
Cosa che a lui tanto era gradito,
E iniziata sotto augusto auspici,
Di Roma antica infra le maserie,
Fu fatto il giuoco con scommesse serie.

Con sforso ei giscava inaudito,
E la man gli gonfiava entro il braciale,
Togliersi volle allor l'anell' del dito
E non sapendo in luogo porlo in quale,
A una Vener' di marmor in dito pone,
L'anello, e al giuoco si ridispone.

Finito il giuoco, ricerco l'anello,
In dito piu la Venere non l'avea
Sorpreso allora da questo trastullo,
Di cio ragione darsi non sapea.
Pensando che alla sua fidanzata
Tenere dovea la cosa ognor celata.

Torna dalla sua bella e allor la sposa
Con lei si giace nel letto nuziale
Però sembrava cosa dolorosa,
Nel vedersi fra mezzo come un male,
La Venere di marmo, con stupore,
Che a lui diceva: 'Tu mi donasti amore!'

Fino dal giorno che l'anello in dito,
Tu mi mettesti al giuoco del pallone,
Allora il prence offeso e indispetito,
Prese per cio, seria risoluzione,
Andar da un grande mago, ardito e forze
Che di sua casa aprirsegli le porte.

Racconto al mago il fatto come stava,
Esso gli disse non potea far niente,
Il prence allor, piangendo l'implorava
Che in quest'affar sol' lui era potente.
Disse il mago, 'potenza é sovrana,
Ma se contento ti fo, muoio in settimana.'

Tanto fa il' prence e arriva a persuadere
Il mago che gli fa la grazia chiesto,
Gli disse: 'A mezzanotte vai a vedere
Fuori di Roma ove un croccichio appresta,
Di strade, e li vedrai una processione
Che ti farà guarir di tua passione.

'A Venere porgerai sta pergamena,
E allora avrai la grazia che tu chiedi,
Di spiriti vedrai la via piena;

Ed io dovró morire, e tu nol credi.
Morro perche ti fai un tal favore
Tu felice godrai il tuo caro amore.'

Il principe ne andò all luogo indicato,
Trova uno stuolo di spiriti e di demoni
Incede un carro di colore aurato,
Tutto colmo di fiori e di pennoni,
Venere in mezzo assisa a gran fulgore,
Rassembrante la Dea del divo amore.

Allora il prence a lei si avvicina,
Porge la pergamena del gran mago,
Essa rattrista la beltà divina,
E dice: 'Il tuo desir sia reso pago!'
Disse però: 'Il tuo gran negromante
Non in sette giorni, ma morrá all' istante.'

In si dire, fra mezzo a gran fulgore
Circondata da si gran pandemonio
Nelle sfere celesti, il suo dolore,
Sporto del prence—e del matrimonio
Il prence fu felice—piú che innante—
Ma il gran mago fu ver, mori all' istante.

Venus and the Ring.

"There was a prince of old in the Roman land,
Who to a lovely princess gave his heart;
And each had placed upon the other's hand
A ring from which they vowed to never part;
And he in all surpassed all men by far,
Gentle in peace and terrible in war.

One day, when sides were formed and bets were laid
Among his friends to make a game at ball,
It pleased him much to think it would be played,
With great authority to watch it all;
So 'twas arranged that they the game would hold,
Beyond the gates, 'mid ruins grey and old.

Now, as he played with mighty strength, he found
His hand too closely pressed upon the sling
Or band wherewith the player's wrist is bound,

So from his finger he removed the ring:
Seeing a marble Venus standing there,
He put the ring upon her finger fair.

And when the game was played he hastened quick
Unto the Venus, but the ring was gone,
And much he was surprised at such a trick,
Being assured that he was seen by none;
And he was vexed to think, all things above,
How he could keep it secret from his love.

And so it came at last that he was wed,
And then there happened something strange, I ween,
For as he lay by his fair bride in bed,
A something cold and evil came between:
The marble Venus, who in ghostly tone
Spoke slowly unto him—'Thou art mine own!

Mine hast thou been in truth, and since the day
When on my finger thou didst put the ring.'
So he was frozen till the morning ray,
And then resolved to break this conjuring,
And going to a famous magian,
With shuddering voice to him his tale began,

Relating to him all that went before:
The sage replied that nothing could be done.
The Prince long prayed him, and with weeping sore,
To use his power for once for him alone.
The magian said: 'If I this thing should try,
Within a week I certainly shall die.'

Yet long the Prince did beg the magian's grace,
Until the latter yielded to his prayer,
And said: 'This night go to a certain place,
Away from Rome. Thou'lt find a cross-road there,
And thou wilt see a strange procession pass,
Seeming in number like the blades of grass.

'Then unto Venus, there, this parchment show,
And unto thee thy ring again she'll give;
Spirits will swarm around, above, below.
And I must die, which thou wilt not believe;
Yes, for this favour I must lose my life,
That thou mayest live in love with thy young wife.'

The Prince then sought the place, which was not far,
And saw the troop of demons fill the way,
Until there came a stately golden car,
All garlanded with flowers and pennons gay,
Where, in the midst, sat Lady Venus bright,
The queen resplendent of all love and light.

To the divinely beautiful he drew,
And gave the parchment which he erst had won,
And as she read it, sad the goddess grew,
And said, 'What you desire shall soon be done;'
But added, 'Thy great magian shall be free
From life, not in a week, but instantly!'

And in a flash, away from that great light,
All in that wondrous pandemonium,
As if from torment dark to heavenly light,
The Prince was rapt. All joy to him did come,
And he was ever happy with his bride;—
But, as the queen had spoke, the magian died!"

I had some years ago another MS. Italian poem, by another person, on this same subject of Venus and the Ring, and with it sundry collections of traditions, all of which, I fear, are lost beyond recovery.

LAMIA

"Now there are some who think that the word *Lamia* is derived from the name of that proud and cruel Queen of Lybia who was the daughter of Belus and Libyes; and others that they are *Empusas*, . . . who are *carnium præsertim humanarum appetentissimas*, very ravenous for human flesh."—*Fromann de Fascinatione*, 1674.

"Et Philostratus simile narrat de Lamia, Menippi Lycii philosophi, in pulchram mulierem apud Corinthum conversa, quam Tyanæus Apollonius deprehendit mulierem esse."—*Henrici Cornelii Agrippa de Occulta Philosophia*, Lib. iii. chap. 32.

"Ut lubrica serpens exuit in spinis restem."—F. LENA.

IT happened on a day after I had been reading the poem of *Lamia* by Keats, that I told the tale to Marietta Pery, who recalled the story as *she* had heard it in infancy, and then, being inspired with the spirit of Apollo, sat down and flashed off, to a tune which she hummed, the romance which I here give, begging the reader to note that I print it accurately from the first or original draft, without changing a letter:

LAMIA.

"Dal bel volto gentil dal biondo crine,
Slanciato il personal, franca e severa;
Lamia incedea nel volgo a malo fine,
E di malvagitá ricolma ell' era;
Tisti[1] e brutali i sui pensieri avea,
Del vizio, e del delitto essa era Dea.

In virtú di stregoni e malefizi,
E tutto cio che il fatalismo appresto,
Per contentare i suoi ibridi vizi,
Nel turpe maleficio sempre desto,
E come se in far cio non fosse niente,
Da bella donna divenne serpente.

[1] Tristi.

Avida di succhiar lo sangue umano,
Adocchiato un bel giovan di vent' anni,
Di tutto fece per averlo in mano,
Non guardando recar ne guai ne danni,
Ed or vi narrerò che fece il mostro,
Invocando l'aiuto di Cagliostro.

Su di un vasto piazzal d'alberi adorno
Di rose, di cipressi e di banani,
E di ferreo cancel circuito intorno,
E di aiule ricolmo a pezzi e brani,
In modo disegnate all' uso inglese,
Piú bel luogo apparia di tal paese.

E sulla sommitá di si bel sito,
Che dell' ive apparia pendente e gaio,
Sontuoso palazzo alto infinito,
E di porte munito in puro acciaio,
Erger' facea la bella Lamia a incanto
Un Eden di delizie, e pur di pianto.

Come turpe serpente incantatore,
In bianco vel vestita, e in crin disciolto,
Oppresso dall' inganno e del dolore,
Che a lei tal vita non durava molto,
Assisa su di un morbido cuscino,
Aspettava il bel giovin peregrino.

Guiunse infatti la vittima all' appello
E nel mentre che Lamia a lui si dava,
Per il sangue succhiar del tapinello,
Un negromante sorse che irradiava
Con fulgurea luce il bel castello,
E con voci e minaccia a Lamia impera,
Che serpente ritorni come ell 'era.

A suppliar Lamia se dette il mago;
Dicendo, 'un solo desiderio appago,
Non mi scoprir di questa vi le azione,
Che presa son d'amor per tal garzone.'
Ma a tali detti il gran mago rispose:
'Non posso dare ascolto alle tue cose.'

'Tu infame siei miserabil germe,
Con un mio cenno faro tutto sparire,
Io ti calpesto e ti rendo inerme,
Ringraziami che non ti fo morire'—
Ed in si dir del mago tutto fu niente:—
Lamia nell' erbe ristriscio serpente."

Lamia.

"Gold locks to beauty greater beauty lent,
Brave was her mien, at graceful ease, yet stern;
Thus Lamia walked the world on evil bent,
For in all sin she nothing had to learn;
Cruel and grim in every thought was she,
Of vice and crime the very deity.

Until by sorceries and malefice,
And all which to fatality belongs,
And to content her most inordinate vice,
And finding all her joy in human wrongs,
The fairest form to her seemed weak and tame,
So from a woman she a snake became.

Once meeting a fair youth of twenty years,
She felt for blood a thirst insatiate,
And bent thereon, devoid of earthly fears,
Nor heeding evil which she might create,
She followed him. I'll tell the whole ere long;
Spirit of Cagliostro, aid my song!

In a fair place where trees and shrubs abound,
'Mid rose and cypress and banana bowers,
Where a grand balustrade passed all around,
And there were beds for every kind of flowers,
In the old style which we the English call,
Of all in the land the fairest of them all.

And there in many a place the ground-pine grows,
And many a pleasant herb to soothe or heal,
And high to heaven a sumptuous palace rose,
Its portal well adorned with shining steel.
All this from sorcery did Lamia borrow,
An Eden of delight, and then of sorrow.

As a base serpent and a sorceress,
Clad all in white, with flowing golden hair,
Oppressed with sin and also in distress
That she this form only a while could wear;
Thus on a full, soft cushion Lamia lay,
Waiting her fair and foreign youth one day.

And, as if called, the youth before her stood;
Sweetly she smiled because he came to call,
Yearning intensely still to suck his blood,
When all at once there entered in the hall
A mighty magian, who, 'mid the gloom,
Sent forth a flash of lightning in the room,
And said to Lamia: 'The farce is o'er;
Become a serpent, as thou wert before!'

And then to supplicate she did begin,
And thus in plaintive accent she did sing:
'I beg of thee, do not reveal my sin;
'Twas all for love alone I did this thing.'
But unto her the magian stern replied:
'I will not list to thee, nor aught will hide.

'Thou'rt infamous, and born in evil hour;
All this false show shall vanish at a breath;
I scorn thee, and I take away thy power:
Thank me that thou art not condemned to death.'
Then at his word all there away did pass—
Lamia as serpent vanished in the grass."

When Marietta read this over to me, I objected that the allusion to an English garden was *rococo*, and that the invocation to Cagliostro smacked of Dumas. Whereupon she naively assured me that in Italian *all' uso Inglese* referred to extremely old-fashioned gardening; "old-fashioned" in her mind representing anything from Louis Philippe back to Julius Cæsar or Tarquin. Which reminded me that once, when I was describing the old Lombard crown of Queen Kunegonda to a young lady, she eagerly interrupted me with the remark: "Oh, I know what it is like—high old tortoise-shell; my grandmother had one."

However, Bella Marietta, being convinced, re-wrote the whole poem, removing allusions to banana-trees, Cagliostro, and English gardening, and corrected the metre, and smoothed the words as with starch and a flat-iron till it was pretty enough. But I have preferred to give the first rough draft in all its quaintness, that the reader may judge what a real Italian improvisation is like.

There are two points in this her poem which deserve special notice. One is, that she said she had heard this and the other tales which she wrote for me from her *nonna*, or grandmother. Now this her version of *Lamia* corresponds accurately to the classical story as related by Burton in the *Anatomy of Melancholy* :—

"Philostratus, in his fourth book, *De Vita Apollonii*, hath a memorable instance in this kind, which I may not omit, of one Menippus Lycius, a young man twenty-five years of age, that, going betwixt Cenchreas and Corinth, met such a phantasm in the habit of a fair gentlewoman, which, taking him by the hand, carried him home to her house in the suburbs of Corinth, and told him she was a Phœnician by birth, and if he would tarry with her, he should hear her sing and play, and drink such wine as never any drank, and no man should molest him; but she, being fair and lovely, would die with him, that was (also) fair and lovely to behold. The young man, a philosopher, otherwise staid and discreet, able to moderate his passions, though not this of love, tarried with her a while to his great content, and at last married her, to whose wedding, among other guests, came Apollonius, who, by some probable conjectures, found her to be a serpent, a Lamia, and that all her furniture was, like Tantalus' gold described by Homer, no substance, but mere illusions. When she saw herself descried she wept, and desired Apollonius to be silent; but he would not be moved, and thereupon the plate, house, and all that was in it *vanished in an instant.*"[1]

It would be absurd to compare, on general grounds of poetic merit, this rough improvisation of a poor Italian seamstress with the marvellous, magnificent, florid, and

[1] Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part iii., Sect. 2, Memb. 1, Subs. 1.

tenderly sentimental lyric by Keats. Yet there is a great excellence in the former of truth to the original. A Lamia was never a dear, good, amorous, pitiable creature who loved a youth; she was *ab initio* the type and proverb of Vileness, a blood-sucker or devil-vampire, seeking whom she could devour, under the guise of beauty and innocence. Her sole object was to kill Menippus and drink his life-blood. Among a hundred writers, Keats is the only one who has made her an innocent, interesting martyr to love, and though much is allowed—*pictoribus, et cætera*—to painters and poets, they should never utterly distort and pervert myths, however beautiful their perversions may be. There is something *weak* in the invariable sensuousness, this yearning for kisses and crime, this long-haired, lank, starved Erotomania which seems to wail, "How I wish I could get—some—*love!*" and gives to experience an impression of wretched men maddened by sexual starvation. It would embrace the devil himself if he came as a pretty girl. The Romans, Greeks, and Orientals, who were *not* starved by poverty or piety for want of women, were capable of conceiving a Lamia who was beautiful and yet deserving punishment.

The old Græco-Roman story is directly to the purpose, and in accordance with it, Marietta has manifested a dramatic conciseness deserving comment. That the heroine was a deity of vice, and finally got to be so evil that the human form became uncomfortable to her, is original, and briefly and well expressed in a line:—

"Da bella donna divenne serpente."

I beg the reader to bear in mind that a Lamia expressed the very worst type of iniquity. Therefore there is great art in depicting the progress in vice of the woman, in explaining how Lamia was inspired by the *virtú* of evil magic, and "all that to which *fatality* led," till she irre-

sistibly became a serpent; in which latter there is a spirit of antique belief casting some light on the "Animism" of early races, in which human beings were, or became, animals in accordance with their natures. In Red Indian tales all animals were once human; as it was explained to me by a Passamaquoddy, in time the brutal, bearish men became bears, and the beaverish men beavers, by a process of reversed Darwinism.

The description of the palace recalls Spenser. It is succinctly described as—

"An Eden of delight—and then of sorrow;"

which is a good simile of a fall or change from joy. In the original we are told that "*all vanished in an instant*" —note it well. This is how Keats disposes of the swift evanishment:—

"Then Lamia breathed death-breath; the sophist's eye,
Like a sharp spear went through her utterly,
Keen, cruel, perceant, stinging: she, as well
As her weak hand could any meaning tell,
Motioned him to be silent, vainly so.
He look'd and look'd again a level—No!
'A serpent!' echoed he; no sooner said
Than with a frightful scream she vanished:
And Lycius' arms were empty of delight,
As were his limbs of life from that same night.
On the high couch he lay; his friends came round—
Supported him—no pulse or breath they found,
And in its marriage robe the heavy body wound."

Marietta makes short work of this, for it is the *conciseness* of the original story which gives it all its charm; and as we are told in it that "all vanished in an instant," so she, catching the idea of ending with a flash, simply states in one line—

"Lamia as serpent vanished in the grass."

Which is an ending not to be surpassed, albeit *ristricio* rather means sliding or slipping, trailing away—"*Ut lubrica serpens.*" Heine has been greatly praised for

summing up his small poems in one conclusive telling line, but he never really surpassed this.

"I confess," notes Flaxius, *à propos* of this, "that I have a love of simplicity and strength in poetry, which is *not* in accordance with modern taste. The old Icelandic text of Frithiof's Saga is, fifty times over, more charming and poetical to me than Tegner's washy, sweet-pretty version of it, and therefore I may be altogether wrong, according to the æsthetes. Few, few indeed, and very far between—*rari nantes in gurgito vasto*—like small potatoes in most distant hills—are the Victorian or even nineteenth century poets, who have distinguished themselves by the classic virtues of clearness, conciseness, and the *strength* which is original. All other merits I may freely grant, but these indeed we woefully do want, albeit Virgil and Homer are not unknown to us. Our bards are all too diluted—think what a concentrated, condensed Wordsworth, or Shelley, or Tennyson, or Byron, would have been! The great masters of ancient days all wrote too little; ours write far too much.

"Now, as Lamia begins as a beauty and ends as a serpent, like Satan's beloved daughter, 'tis clear that she means *Sin*, and it was as sin, or vileness, horror, cruelty, filth, and poison disguised that those who invented her understood her, and it is an evil thing to destroy the old landmarks of tradition, and give a different meaning to ancient types and characters."

THE FLORENTINE LEGEND OF LAMIA

I HAVE another legend of Lamia, gathered by Maddalena in Florence, which identifies her with the serpent,[1] and to a degree with the Hebrew Lilith:

LAMIA.

"Lamia is a lady who is half woman and half serpent. She was the daughter of rich parents, who, when first married, lived together in great happiness. And they were very liberal to the poor. But when for a long time the lady bore no children, first the husband became angry, and then the wife lost all her happiness; so she went first to the saints, and when they did her no good, to witches and wizards; but all was of no avail, so she ceased giving alms, and was unkind to all.

"One day there came to her a poor old woman who begged for charity for her daughter, who would soon be confined. Then the lady replied: 'I hope she may bring forth a serpent. All the women who have nothing to eat bear children, and I, who can have none, must needs support them! Truly I would rather have a serpent for a child than none, and could I have my wish, all mothers should bear nothing else!'

"Then the old woman, who was a witch, answered with a spell:—

"'Lady, in thy curses wild,
Thou'st wished a serpent for my child.
What thou'st said indeed may be,
But it all shall turn on thee;
For thou thyself a child shalt bear
Unto the waist a maiden fair,
Beauty in face shall never fail,
But she shall have a serpent's tail.
As a fair maid she shall be born,
But early on the second morn,

[1] "Doubtless the author here refers to Lamia, not Maddalena, albeit the trail of the serpentis over 'em all to a certain degree—wizard, witch, and poetess—to judge by their works."—*Flaxius.*

Thy husband, with it in his arms,
Will see the working of my charms;
At his first kiss, a wonder strange
O'er it will come, the serpent change.
No spirit can the spell undo;
The curse will come, I tell you true;
No sorcerer the charm can sever,
She'll be the *Lamia* for ever!'

"And as it all came to pass, and Lamia in life was a witch, and after her death a spirit who did evil to newly married couples and newly born children, yet she is so far human that she can be appeased or pleased with invocations. Therefore those who fear her should say:

"'Lamia! Lamia! Lamia!
A te mi racommando,
Che in pace tu ci voglia
Lasciare me, é vero
Che tu siei infelice;
Ma colpo noi non abbiamo,
La tua madre e stata
Quella che per la felicità
Sua non ha guardato,
Alla sfortuna tua,
Questa quello ti vengo
A levare al meno,
Per un poco in pace
Tu possa stare!'"

"'Lamia! Lamia! Lamia! see!
I commend myself to thee,
That in peace thou lett'st me be!
Thou'rt unhappy, as I know;
Nor is't thy fault that thou art so,
But thy mother's, who, 'tis said,
Brought misery upon thy head;
So now I pray by grace of thine
No harm may come to me or mine.
As thou dost me from fear release,
So mayst thou ever be in peace!'

"This must be written on a paper, which is to be taken to some place in the country and cast over the shoulder; and this being done, the one invoking must walk away without looking behind."

This conclusion is an old Roman formula. It may be observed that in all those traditions which contain incantations the narrative or story is a mere frame for the

picture, or a basket for the fruit. They were made by witches for witches, not for the multitude. Hence they have generally a different character from fairy tales, and very often possess a strange originality which excepts them from the common tradition.

The main object of this tale is to give a charm which, like the blessing of the rabbi at a Jewish wedding, is to prevent the enemy of babes from exercising an evil influence, as appears in the Florentine-Jewish poem of *Barucabbà*,[1] where the rabbi—

" Li benedica
E li consoli
Con un buon numero
Di bei figlinoli,
Che l'empia strega
Lilliri mai offenda
E la lor prole
Non nasca cieca
Non zoppa nò.
Non gobba, o nana,
Non istroppiata
O in altro mò."

" Blessed them and solaced them
With a fair promise
Of a great number
Of beautiful children;
That the vile sorceress,
Lilliri, should never
Hurt them or their offspring.
None should know blindness,
None should be cripples,
None should go limping,
None should be hunchbacked,
None should be dwarfed,
Or injured in aught."

This blessing of the rabbi and the incantation of the witch are both levelled at two who were, as many scholars have declared, in the beginning one and the same — Lamia and Lilith, who figures in the Hebrew

[1] A halfpenny or *soldo* broadside sold in Florence, setting forth the matrimonial misadventures of a Jew named Barucabbà. Like nearly all the literature of the kind in existence making fun of the Hebrews, it appears to have been written by one of the people, and not by a *Goi*.

melody just cited as *Lilliri*. The Lamia was always a *wicked* witch, or a being who destroyed. "Lamias," wrote Carpzovius, the cruel witch-lawyer, "are beings who cause thunderstorms, plot the destruction of man and cattle, attend diabolical meetings or synagogues, to which they ride on pitchforks, rods, or brooms, and exercise carnal iniquity with the devil." Nor was her classic prototype one whit better, but rather worse.

The writing the exorcism on paper, which is most unusual in Italian witchcraft, identifies Lamia with Lilith, in so far that the Jews also write their spell out and hang it in the room where the sorceress or her comrades the *Benemmerin* are expected to come. Pietro Piperino (whom I believe to have been the original Peter Piper of the nursery rhyme), in his work, *De Effectibus Magicis*, with reckless philology derives Lamia—*à Lilith hebræo*—from the Hebrew Lilith. It is worth observing that to him, as to every writer except Keats, Lamia is simply a creature of abomination, and chiefly a murderess of infants, and a cannibal—an enticer of youths in order to afterwards devour them—"*libidinis cupiditate allicere juvenes ut postea devorent; sic Horatius:*

"Heri pransæ Lamiæ probrum vivum extrahat alvo."

THE CRICKETS OF THE CASCINE

"Grillo, mio Grillo!
Se tu vo' moglie dillo!
Se poi t'un la vuoi,
Abbada a' fatti tuoi!"
—*Dettati e Gerghi della Citta di Firenze*, 1886.

FOR some time both before and after Ascension Day all the children in Florence—among whom I may include most of the elders—are immensely interested in the question of crickets. These insects, being caught, are sold in pretty little cages resembling in miniature those for canary-birds, and if they sing within a certain time, it is a sign of good fortune for the coming year. Others acquire luck by taking the captives into the fields and setting them free.

In ancient times, or among Greeks and Romans, the *cicada*, which had a love in common with locusts, grasshoppers, katy-dids, and similar insects, was regarded as the most distinguishing harbinger or herald of summer, and was specially associated with the Muses and music. In the latter respect it took precedence of the nightingale, which was regarded, indeed, as being most musical, but also most melancholy. Those who are specially interested in the antiquities of the subject may consult *Die Symbolik und Mythologie der Natur*, by J. B. Friedrich, Würzburg, 1859, and the chapter on the Cavaletta in my *Etruscan-Roman Legends* (London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1892). But for this present work I shall chiefly confine myself to what I obtained from Maddalena and Marietta Pery, the former being, of course, a strange narrative

based on witchcraft, and the latter a poem by an *improvisatrice* founded on a legend. Both are in many respects very interesting, and should the reader chance to be in Florence on Ascension Day, he will, I trust, peruse them with pleasure:

Racconto sopra Grilli.

"There was of yore a magician who stole a beautiful girl and shut her up in an enchanted tower.[1] This maid had a lover who was the son of a king; and when the youth heard that his beloved had been seized by the sorcerer he said: 'Unless I seek and find her whom I have lost, I shall go mad.' Then he begged pardon and leave of his parents to depart, which they gave, with much money and great sorrow, because he was their only son.

"Then mounting his horse he rode on and away, though he knew not where to go, and at nightfall found himself weary and in a lonely land of rocks and forest and falling waters. At last he beheld afar off, like a mere speck, a small house, and rode towards it, hoping for a place wherein to rest. And on the way he met an infirm old woman who hobbled along, while two boys were jeering and vexing her. Whereupon the Prince, who had a good heart, was displeased, but knowing that kindness is as good as correction to cause a cure, gave each of them a penny, and said: 'Take care and never do such a wicked thing again. You should always respect the lame and old; indeed, you should respect everybody, but especially your elders, still more the infirm, and most of all the very old; so now be good boys, and beg pardon of the old woman for having offended her, and then run home.' Which they did forthwith, and that is the last of them in the story.

"But the old woman, who was a witch, waiting for the coming of the king's son, said: 'Handsome youth—*bel giovane!*—I thank thee for having taken my part against those boys.' To which he replied politely and pleasantly: 'I only did a part of my duty, and I now complete it by offering you this piece of gold, on which you may live for some time.'

[1] The original has *torre incatenata*, a chained tower, or one with a drawbridge. But I think that *incantata* is the real word. I give the whole *verbatim*.

"The old woman answered: 'I willingly accept your gift; but tell me, are you not in great trouble?' And the Prince replied: 'Truly I am more miserable than thou, and need something more than thou dost anything, and yet I see thy wants are very great:

> "'For though thou art in sore distress,
> Thou would pity, I ween, my wretchedness.'

"'Dear boy,' replied the old woman, 'I know it all. Thou art the son of the king, and thy love was carried away by the magician whom men call the Sorcerer of the Seven Heads. And he has shut her up in a tower, into which no man, indeed, may come in human form. But I will turn thee into a cricket—*Io ti faro diventare Grillo*—so that thou canst enter in unto her; that is, thou mayest not carry her at once away, firstly, because she is chained; and, secondly, when thou art at the gate below the tower, thou must delay and sing this incantation:

> "'Sono uomo molto infelice[1]
> Se un grillo potessi diventare,
> Per por' fino alla mia bella arrivare,
> Ma con la grazia
> Della strega Lucrezia
> Che ora ho incontrato,
> Che la grazia mi vuol fare,
> Fino alla mia bella potere arrivare,
> E col suo ajuto da questa torre,
> Poterla levare,
> Sono uomo, e grillo
> Voglio diventare,
> E fino alla mia bella
> Voglio arrivare,
> Strega Lucrezia! un grillo
> Fammi diventare!'

> "'I am a man, and most unhappy too,
> And could I only take a cricket's form,
> Then I would come unto the one I love.
> But by the favour of Lucretia,
> The powerful witch whom I erewhile have met,
> I know the power will be given me
> To meet my love and take her from the tower.
> A man I am, a cricket I will be—
> Great witch, Lucretia, I call to thee!'

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[1] This is an incantation in the true irregular witch-measure. The tones are prolonged in many places, ending with a peculiar intonation on the infinitives.

"So he passed into the tower as a cricket, and to protect him Lucretia called together all the witches and fairies in the land, and they flew in with him, so that he was one among many; when all at once the sorcerer with seven heads entered, and began to sing:

"'A che puz e di cristiane,
O cozne, o cazne!
Ste quent cogne e quent
Cha men voi mogne.'[1]

"Which is in Italian:

"'O che puzzo di cristiano!
O che sene, o che cene stati!
Ma quanto cene e quanti mene,
Voglio mangiare.'

"'Oh what a Christian stink is here!
But whether they're here, or here have been,
Or whether th'are some or none, I ween,
I'll eat them up, 'tis clear!'

"Then Lucretia made all the crickets sing in a loud voice:

"'Siamo grilli strege,
E stregoni che da grilli,
Uomini e donne,
Daver' diventiamo;
Ma grilli noi restiamo,
Cri-cri, cri-cri, cri-cri!
Chantiamo! Balliamo!
Chantiamo—della rabbia
Per farti crepar. Balliamo! Chantiamo!
Della rabbia per farti stintar.
Ai sette teste, ben vero e questo,
Ma noi col nostro *cri-chri, cri-chri!*
Tutte sette le vogliam' tormentar,
Fino che la giovane
Al figlio del re tu voglia,
Tu voglia scatenar,
Il figlio del re e qui con noi,
Per farti crepar,
Crepar con dolor—
Cri-cri, cri-cri, cri-cri!
La giovane va a scatenar,
Con noi la vogliam' portar!
Cri-cri, cri-cri, cri!'

[1] The sorcerer here speaks in the dialect of the mountain district of the Toscana-Romana, or rural Bolognese. It is very much the "Fi-fe-fo-fum" of "Jack the Giant-killer."

"'We all are cricket witches
And wizards, that is plain;
Man and woman,
Formerly human,
Crickets we will remain.
Cree-cree, cree-cree, cree-cree!
Let us sing and dance—
Fly back—now advance!
Sing till with rage we make you burst,
We with gladness, until in madness
You tear off every head accurst.
Seven heads on *you!* That may be true!
But we, we, we, we, we, we, we,
With our *cree-cree, cree-cree, cree-cree, cree!*
Will madden all seven until we see
You unchain the lady and set her free,
The bride of the Prince, who is here our chief;
Cree-cree, cree-cree!
Until we make you burst with grief.
Set the lady free, we say,
Then we will carry her far away.
Cree-cree, cree-cree, cree-cree!'

"And so the sorcerer was maddened by the cry of *cree-cree!* till he unchained the maiden, who, turned into a cricket, flew away with the rest from the tower.

"Now as to these crickets, or the king of the crickets, and what became of them. When the Sorcerer of the Seven Heads saw that they had escaped, he said, or sang, this incantation:

"'The maid has escaped from the chains,
The chains with which she was bound,
And thou too, O son of a king,
Who didst show such force and courage
In entering this tower,
Which none have entered before!
Yet the power was not thine,
But that of the witch Lucretia
Who came unto thy aid.

Now by my magic power
I conjure and condemn thee,
Thou with the witches all,
Who came unto thy aid,
That only for half the year
Ye shall have the human form,
And during the other half
Crickets ye must remain,
And on Ascension Day
Ye shall chiefly feel the charm.

As prisoners one and all,
Ye shall live in holes in the earth,

And cry your *cree-cree, cree!*
And many people shall come,
Children, women, and men
Shall come to seek for you.
Thou only, as the king,
Shalt ever escape the search,
And never be taken away,
For thou shalt be left to guide
And govern the crickets all.

And this thou art charmed to do,
To show especial grace
To all who love and are loved,
As the witch Lucretia
Did give her grace to thy love
When thou didst win thy bride
Away from the magic tower,
And drove the sorcerer wild
With your cry of *cree-cree, cree!*
Until he was forced to yield.
As the Princess was shut in a tower,
Your folk shall be shut in a cage.
To those who are in luck
There shall be given to eat
A bit of salad-leaf,
Even as thou hadst luck
When, in the prison-tower,
Thou didst reclaim the maid;
So shall ye, as crickets confined,
Learn that my charms still bind,
As in the tower of yore
Ye were confined before.'"

Among the people the cricket is a phallic emblem or symbol of productiveness, as is abundantly testified by the extraordinary amount of coarse *double entendre*, pictorial and printed, which appeared in all the lower-class newspapers of Florence only last year, about Ascension Day. That is, the Cricket-Prince is a duplicate of Adonis, who passes half the year in the gloomy earth, and half in the sunshine above with Venus.

The incantation of the crickets will remind the reader of the mad witch-songs by Ben Jonson and other poets of his time; nor is it, indeed, inferior to them:

"'Buzz,' quoth the gad-fly;
'Hum,' says the bee:
'Buzz and hum,' they say,
And so do we."

I need hardly say that the cricket story, like all common fairy tales whatever, is only a variant from others. The legends which come from witch families are generally far more original, ruder, and refer chiefly to sorcery.

The next legend relative to the Crickets of the Cascine is all a poem, by Marietta Pery. It is worth noting that the crickets from this place are supposed to be superior to any other. A man in the Via Calzaioli, who sells them every year, always displays a placard stating that *his* crickets were born and bred in the Cascine, and guaranteed to be of the purest breed. And now to the second story, of which I give only what I believe is a very faithful close translation, for want of space for the original:

THE KING OF THE CRICKETS.

"'Mid flowery meadows by the Arno's stream
Fair Florence rises, dear to all men's hearts;
As if not traced by man, but like a dream,
The fold of genius, cradle of the arts,
And Nature seems with a bright sky to bless,
Free from all hatred and from wickedness.

There was a Prince Ranieri, well approved,
Who ruled the army and the city's fate.
He was by all the people well beloved,
One of the strongest pillars of the State;
So proud and brave, well formed in face and limb,
All happiness did seem to live in him.

Upon the summit of th' imperial hill,
And in a royal home, Ranieri dwelt;
He knew no grief, nor had he any ill,
And in his princely life all joy he felt.
That was his day, but Cupid on the morrow
Turned all his song of joy to silent sorrow.

Oft on his fiery war-horse he would ride
Upon the Roman road at break of day,
Where soon a maiden of the folk he spied,
And glad he was to meet her in his way;

For she was beautiful, with long black hair,
Lovely in face, with grand dark eyes severe.

She of a wicked stepmother was slave,
A mongrel hag of colour like to clay,
Who did with cruelty to her behave,
Taking all joy from her by night and day;
And great indeed her rage was to discover
That this her victim had a princely lover.

Yet when Ranieri asked the maiden's hand,
The grim Megæra said: 'Tis sad for me;
A stern condition doth her fate commend,
For unto no one can she wedded be
Until a hero famed in peace and wars
Has found the Flower of a Hundred Stars.'

The Prince, impressed by such a strange command,
Summoned his strength and said unto the fair,
That all his life, with helm and trusty brand,
Both fraud and force he had been wont to dare;
And with deep earnestness to her he swore
That he would seek and find the wondrous flower.

And long through devious ways, among all ranks
Of men, to seek that flower Ranieri roved,
Still thinking, on the Arno's flowery banks,
Still musing on the maiden whom he loved,
Until one evening in a gloomy wood
A fearful feeling seemed to chill his blood.

Mighty of heart and brave although so sad,
He heeded not the gloomy sky above,
Nor any darkness round or overhead—
There was a deeper darkness on his love;
When all at once appeared unto his sight
A lady fair, clad in a garment white.

And thus she said to him, full gently speaking:
'O noble Prince, here in this ancient wood,
I know what 'tis that thou art bravely seeking—
The mystic flower which has thy search withstood;
And on Ascension Day that flower shall be
For all thy life a memory of me.

'And every year, upon that festival,
Thou'lt put that flower upon a certain tree;
But if thou fail an evil fate will fall,
O Prince Ranieri, upon thine and thee;
Thy voice shall change into a cricket's hum,
And thou thyself a cricket will become.

'Here, take the flower!' She vanished in the shade,
As doth a shadow of itself a part,
And Prince Ranieri, half in joy and dread,
Felt love again warm up and cheer his heart;
So, thinking all was well, in happy hour
He went unto the witch to show the flower.

And soon there was a wedding gay and glad,
And life for a long time full lightly sped,
Although the stepmother did seem half mad,
That she no more could vex the unhappy maid;
And the bright flower, grown common, as they say,
Was worn by all upon Ascension Day.

And to the Prince the fairy did appear,
From Isolotte, with each blooming spring,
In the Cascine gardens every year,
Where stately oaks stand in a glorious ring;
For her the Prince, at the appointed hour,
Placed on the mighty oak the promised flower.

And yet it chanced, on an Ascension Day,
That Prince Ranieri, when he gained the spot
Where the great oak-tree grew—at break of day—
Found, to his grief, the flower was all forgot.
Then unto him the fairy did appear—
Stern was her voice, her countenance severe.

And this she said: 'At length thy pact is broken;
Now take the punishment sent from above!'
And all at once, when she these words had spoken,
The Prince lost beauty, fortune, and his love,
And, changed into a cricket, went to hide,
Deep in the earth to wail and there abide.

The Queen and all the people sought the Prince;
But all in vain they sought by hill or dale,
For as a man no one beheld him since
That time—until at last there rose the tale

That in the place where the Cascine lay,
The Prince had vanished on Ascension Day;

And that at sunrise, or in twilight dim,
The Prince—a cricket now—was wont to sing;
And many therefore listened unto him,
And heard o'er hill and dale his accents ring,
Outbreaking into verses as they went,
Inspired with sorrow and with sore lament.

'I was a prince of countenance severe,
The earth itself did shake that glance to see;
Now I am humble, dark, and live in fear,
The very stones do now make war on me.
The passer-by now treads upon my back,
The idle boy now takes me for his play;
I have no strength to bite them, for, alack!
I'm naught, and all my power has passed away.
Unhappy now, I loved a lady fair;
By a cursed pact I lost her, as it proved.
I revelled in a happiness too rare,
And suffer now as much because I loved.
All that remains is sand and earth; I rage
In vain when taken by a cruel hand,
And then imprisoned in an iron cage,
I lose my life—and so runs out my sand!'"

There is indeed in the original of this song a quaint and simple expression of antiquity or naiveness, as if it had been written centuries ago. And if the reader will imagine a poem written by an English dressmaker in the style of Spenser, or of Herrick, he may form an idea of what a young Italian girl is still capable.

Mr. Leader Scott, in his interesting *Echoes of Old Florence*, in speaking of heathen customs, remarks that "some have indeed lingered till now, such as the *Scoppio del Carro*, a remnant of the ancient distribution of fire from the central altar, and the Ascension Day *culto* of the *Grillo*, which, I take it, came from the Etruscan *scarabeus*." But among the traditions and incantations of the witches—that is, of old fortune-tellers, who also sell

amulets and perform certain rites or spells for true believers in Florence—the relics of pagan times are neither few nor far between, but are, as this work and my *Etruscan Remains* bear witness, extremely and strangely abundant.

On this subject the authors of *Walks in Florence* say:

"The mole-cricket is an insect well known in Italy. A custom exists of catching them on Ascension Day and confining them in little reed cages. They are supposed to be typical of human life, and that the longer the *grilli* can be kept alive, the longer will be the life of the owner. The custom dates from old Etruscan and Greek times. The reed cages are figured on the walls of Pompeian houses, and the Sicilian Greek poet Theocritus alludes to them. Annually still, on Ascension Day, whole families may be seen flocking to the Cascine at Florence, and after securing their prisoners, they sit down on the grass and partake of their *merenda* or luncheon."

As regards the antiquity of the custom, it has probably always existed wherever small boys were found, it being their natural habit to construct cages, and therein imprison flies, beetles, and specially crickets, as a substitute for singing-birds.

The crickets were at one time brought into a church to sing, as one may read in *Silvia*, by Julia Kavanagh:

"You (English) are far too clever for such things. You would never have the pretty *cicalas* singing vespers on green boughs in the Church of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence. . . . It is given up now, but there are people who remember seeing and hearing them. A long, long time ago a forest was bequeathed for a charity, on condition that *cicalas* should be brought on green boughs, and placed in the church, to sing vespers with the canons."

But Miss Kavanagh is in error when she asserts that there are no *fairies* in Italy. For there is no kind of elf or fay, be it the little household goblin with a red cap, or teasing mannikin sprite, or Robin-good-fellow, or brownie

dweller in the fireplace, who does all the work for the maids, or dancer by night, who does not abound in Northern Italy, as may be found fully confirmed by tales in my work on *Etruscan-Roman Remains in Popular Tradition.* "We have no fairies," quoth Silvia. No fairies, indeed! Truly Silvia was not well up in her own national folk-lore. Nevertheless it is worth remarking how very ignorant, till within a few years, all Italian scholars seem to have been of anything of the kind. I have before me a book on sorcery by Dr. Zangolini, 1864, in which every instance or reference is from Ovid, Virgil, Pliny, Dante, and other classic writers, but not a word from the people.

The reply to Silvia should have been, "What then are *folletti* and *fate?*" since under these two names are found every kind of fairy, from the merry Dusio, three inches in height, who sits on girls' shoulders, and Remle, the drudging gobling of the mill, to the fairy godmother. The truth is, that the real fairy exists in Italy in a greater number of forms than in Great Britain; and there is not much trace of all this in all the elder Italian literature. Yea, it is true; and a fine comment it is on the advantages of a "strictly classical" education, and the confining our studies in the vernacular entirely to authors who "elevate and refine our style." Among a vast number of people in Italy, as a popular novelist has recently declared, even at the present day, that man passes for highly or even sufficiently cultivated, who has read thoroughly or got by heart the five or six great writers. It is time that this state of affairs was passing away, but there is still much truth in the assertion that culture is (as regards popular tradition) very limited.

But of *improvisatrices*—Wordsworth and many more have plained that the romantic and spiritual traditions of olden time have passed away. One thinks there are no more witches revealing curious things, another notes that

poets who sing as birds do, or improvise, are lost to the world—and yet I continue somehow to find them, just as others could if they sought them as I do. One poet has distinctly declared that the day of speaking statues has for ever vanished, and lo! Jules Hoche, in the *Journal Amusant* of December 14, 1895, announces the adaptation of the Edison phonograph to statues, as to clocks, so that future ages may have Gladstones and Salisburys informing them what o'clock it is or what time of day, and Edwin Arnolds spreading vocally the Light of Asia!

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